Red Eyes See Through My Lies

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What happens when you have a deep dark secret that has already ruined your life once? What happens when you're gay, and in love with your best friend? Oh, and did I mention that he doesn't know you're gay? Pokemon Mystery Dungeon YAOI HeroxPartner

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Chapter 1

I had always known that I was gay. I had been openly gay when I was human, and I was still gay when I became a pokemon; however, since love and sex weren't exactly the first things on my mind after my transformation, I never really felt the need to tell anyone about it. Ever since my return after having supposedly gone back to the human world following Team Sureshot's daring confrontation of Rayquaza at Sky Tower, everyone, my partner, Bullet, especially, had been questioning me as to why I hadn't gone back to being a human. I always responded with the same teasing response of "you would miss me too much if I was gone" or "what, you want to get rid of me that much?" I couldn't ever bring myself to tell them the real reason why. As my spirit was floating away into space, all my memories of being a human came back to me in a sudden revelation, like I awaking from a dream. Where I was going, there was no one waiting for me.

After I had come out to my parents about being gay, they had responded by immediately disowning me and kicking my ass out onto the streets. None of my other relatives were willing to acknowledge my existence either. I had hung around my old home for about a week after being kicked out, still expecting that my parents would eventually get over the shock and come looking for me. However, that didn't happen. What did happen, though, was that I sat and watched as they systematically threw out every photo of me, every award I had ever won, and every single one of my possessions that I had been unable to grab as I was ushered out the front door. I wasn't just dead to them, because that would mean that they had still previously had a gay son. No, I had never existed at all. After witnessing this, I gave up on the people that used to be my family.

I dropped out of school too, since I no longer had the time to waste my time with such fruitless endeavors in a harsh, cruel world. I had no friends to turn to either. None of my former classmates understood me. They all referred to me as the little, gay bitch. My jokes were never funny, and my good-natured taunts were

responded to as if I had just killed somebody's dog… with a baseball bat… in front of their four-year-old little brother and sister. I had been left with no one, to starve and freeze to death on the streets. When I had first met Gardevoir, I was sure I must have been dead, and she was an angel come to take me away. When I heard she was looking for a hero, I thought she must have been insane. She appears out of the blue in front of a half-dead mess laying in the gutter, and she declares him to be the long sought after savior of her home world? If you ask me, my skepticism was quiet the natural response, but honestly, she was desperately, and what did either of us have to lose?

So no, there wasn't anybody worth mentioning for me to go back to, and as I looked back towards the world that I was drifting steadily away from, I thought back on all the things that I was leaving behind. My home in Team Sureshot's base that always smelled of the roses that grew outside, the daily exchange of witty banter with the folks in Pokemon Square, the appreciative smiles of the pokemon we helped on a daily basis, and my dear friends and teammates all flooded my mind, but none more so than my closest partner. Bullet, with his big nose, stubby legs, hunched back, squinty eyes, and greasy green fur. He really was something. If he had been human and in high school, he would have been a social pariah with coke bottle glasses that tripped over his own two feet and got stuffed in his own locker by the football team… and everybody else. Yes, that cyndaquil really was a piece of work. He was overly excitable, a truly naïve fool, with an innocent mind, and a heart that was more loyal and kind than any other. Who would have ever thought that a too-cool-for-school scumbag like me would end up having someone like him for a best friend?

It was an easy choice to make. I wasn't about to leave my true life behind in order to go back a world of loneliness in pain, especially knowing that I wouldn't be the only one to suffer if I did. So I returned home, to my real home, and my clumsy fool of a best friend who practically rolled out to hug me as I walked back into the life that I never wanted to leave again. I was a human no more. From that point on, I was B.B., a secretly gay treeko with a complicated past and an attitude as tall as Sky Tower. I would be able to keep having the life that I had had up until then with Bullet and the other

members of Team Sureshot. Nothing else mattered, or so I thought.

Several months passed after that and the continued natural disasters created in the aftermath of the falling star kept all us rescuers busy with business as usual. The days proceeded like clockwork until one day when Luminous Cave suddenly opened up on the stone island in the center of Wiscash's Pond. The evolution buzz quickly spread around town and amongst the ranks of rescue teams, and of course, Bullet and I wanted in on the action too. We were two of the first to plunge into the inky blackness of the cave in search of adventure and new power that awaited us.

As team leader, I went first, after Bullet's insistence. I evolved into Grovyle, and was quite pleased with my new looks, which I admired in the reflective surface of the pond. My skin had darkened to a less intense shade of green; my eyes had narrowed, giving me a more mature-looking gaze; and my limbs had become exponentially stronger, my arms slim and quick, and my legs thick with new muscle. Bullet greeted me with a smile, and then proceeded to blush and tell how cool I looked. I grinned, enjoying his praise, and ushered him forward, telling him that it was his turn to enter the cave and evolve. Bullet then nodded, took a deep breath, and marched into the cave with his head held high.

I waited for what felt like forever for Bullet to come out of the cave; I sat lounging at the water's edge, toying absently with the grass. When, finally, I heard footsteps coming from the cave entrance, I sprang up to see Bullet in his new form. Bullet stepped out into the sunlight, stood up onto two legs, gestured to himself, and asked how he looked. To say that I was stunned would be a massive understatement, I'm sure that my heart completely stopped beating for a good minute!

Bullet as a quilava was absolutely breathtaking! His substantial nose had shrunk back into a gracefully curved muzzle. His tiny limbs had lengthened and grown muscular, but still appeared smooth and lean. His curved form had stretched out and become agile and flexible. His greasy, coarse fur was now shiny and soft-looking. But most impressive of all were his eyes! Those eyes, that were so squinty that you couldn't even tell what color they were, were now wide open, ruby red pools that burned with emotion. The fire that blazed

forth from his head and tail couldn't hold a candle to the fire that raged in those brilliant orbs!

I coughed and fought to regain my composure and hide my blushing. I told him that he looked good, and he smiled a huge smile and giggled in happiness. Damn that was cute! I quickly started walking off in the direction of Pokemon Square, saying that we should present our new forms to our other friends and then call it a day, after so much excitement. Bullet agreed and then took off running on his strong new legs, with me following behind him, easily keeping pace with my much longer strides.

As I was strolling through the square behind Bullet, I continuously found my gaze drifting downwards to admire the gentle slope of his back that extended to his perfectly shaped ass… WHAT? As soon as I could do so without making it clear to Bullet that something wasn't right, I excused myself and rushed home to hide myself and wallow in my shame.

I had always loved Bullet's heart, but I had also always thought that he was safe to be just friends with, due to his physical awkwardness. Well, that was out the window, now. Bullet was as unbelievably beautiful on the outside as he was on the inside, and his heart seemed even more angelic now that it was reflected so clearly in his eyes. It was official. I was head-over-heels in love with my best friend, and he didn't even know that I was gay. There was no way that me telling him now could possibly work out in my favor, so I would just have to keep it a secret from him and take it to my grave with me. We were going to be best friends forever, and that was just the way that things had to be.

Chapter 2

B.B. POV

Damn that Lombre! He had me so furious that I was seeing red! Why couldn't he just keep his mouth shut? Ever since he had returned to Pokemon Square with the news that the frozen walls of the Stormy Sea had opened up, Bullet had been hanging on his every word, drooling and practically bouncing out of his skin in excitement.

It's not that I was jealous, though! Not at all! Just because Bullet would sit for hours, listening to Lombre with his fantastic eyes sparkling and heart-stopping smile on his face… No I wasn't jealous. I was concerned. No, not quite concerned exactly, I was worried sick! Here Lombre was, glorifying Stormy Sea to the point that it was all Bullet could talk about. Day after day, Bullet would go on and on about Stormy Sea and the amazing things that Lombre had told him about it. He would talk about all the treasures and hidden secrets that were surely hidden away at the bottom of such a deep ocean, and how he couldn't wait to explore such an incredible place.

Is it no wonder I was horrified? Here was my beautiful, fiery angel, going on about exploring to the bottom of a nearly bottomless ocean in a dungeon of slippery, ever-shifting shelves of sea ice! This would be an extremely difficult and dangerous exploit for anyone, but Bullet was a fire type pokemon for crying out loud! What could he be thinking? That dungeon would be filled with water pokemon that could shoot him down before he even sensed their presence in the watery darkness! Not to mention that the light from the fire spewing out from his head and tail would attract the attention of every enemy in the ocean in no time flat! Add on top of that the fact that all it would take was a slight loss of footing and Bullet could go sliding out through one of the many gaps in the ice and get swept away by the turbulent currents that would drown all but the strongest of swimmers, which Bullet certainly was not!

I couldn't even talk him out of it, either. Every time I tried to bring up

the subject of Bullet not going, he would look at me with those eyes, so filled with excitement, and my tongue would tie itself into a knot in my mouth. It was no good. No matter how badly I wanted to, I could not refuse him anything.

I had managed to put off the exploration for awhile, with various excuses coupled with the fact that we had no way of getting out to Stormy Sea. However, that period of relief drew to a close when Bullet and I were called to Wiscash's Pond. Wiscash had summoned us to present us with a gift that he had found amongst his possessions. It was a Surf HM disc. Bullet was overjoyed. He danced in circles, bounced up and down, and fervently thanked Wishcash for his generosity. I smiled respectfully on the outside and thanked Wishcash for thinking of us, but on the inside, it felt like my heart had stopped and my body had frozen over. Curse that old man for always saying and doing more than he should! First there was the Ninetales Legend incident, and now this!

There was no avoiding it now. Team Sureshot was making an excursion to Stormy Sea, and there was nothing I could do to change it. It's not like I didn't think that Bullet was strong, it wasn't that at all! I knew Bullet was tough and could handle himself in just about any situation. That's why I trusted him as my partner. It was just that I knew how badly the odds were stacked against him on this one; plus, the thought of anything bad happening to him or him being hurt in any way made me sick to my stomach. I would do whatever it took to prevent something like that from happening, but what if I was distracted or the moment went by too quickly for me to respond? What was I supposed to do if I lost him?

…I had never had someone I cared about so much before. Even if he could never find out about my feelings, it didn't matter. I loved him, but it wasn't just that. He was my best friend, my most trusted partner, and the closest thing to family I had. Nothing else mattered to me, as long as I could stay by Bullet's side. As long as he was happy and safe, then I could deal with the rest.

Bullet POV

I was worried. Well, shouldn't I have been? My best friend in the whole world, B.B. the Grovyle, was acting strangely, distracted and

withdrawn. The last time he acted like this was right before we set off to Sky Tower, right before he was supposed to disappear from this world. Of course, I was concerned! I mean, I don't think something like that could happen again. He said it wouldn't. B.B. said that he wasn't going anywhere, after the last time, but… something still wasn't right.

I still often remembered the day that B.B. and I met. I had been concerned with the rising number of natural disasters, as usual, and had gone for a walk through Tiny Woods to contemplate the possibility of forming a rescue team. The idea had occurred to me before, of course, but without anyone I could trust to be my partner for a rescue team, my goal seemed out of my reach. Feeling discouraged by this thought, I absently wandered off from my regular path and stumbled into a clearing, where I saw a Treecko laying in an odd position on the ground, passed out. I was shocked, obviously, but even more than that, I was happy. Not that he was hurt, of course, but because, here was my chance, weak as I was, to help somebody who was in trouble.

At first, I thought B.B. was really quite strange, but my opinion of him quickly changed. When Butterfree came charging out of the trees, calling for help for her child who had been trapped in the ravine in the deepest part of the forest, B.B. did not hesitate. He assured Butterfree that he would get her kid back to her, no sweat. Then, he gave a cocky sort of smirk and scurried off in the direction Butterfree had indicated, in the direction of the ravine. I followed after him, and was astonished by his bravery and determination, even though it was clear by the look on his face that he was completely unfamiliar with everything around him, even his own body moved rather awkwardly as he became accustomed to it.

Watching him fight his way through the ravine, I had already developed immense respect for B.B.. He was someone who knew how to handle himself, and didn't hesitate, once he dedicated himself to something. I could easily tell this, right from the start. I already thought he was a cool guy, but when we returned with Caterpie, from the way he smiled at the kid and pat him on the head, I could tell that he had a really good heart too. He was gentle and kind, as well as being proud and strong. Sure he had a bit of chip on

his shoulder, but that kind of added to his charm, I thought.

I quickly jumped at the chance to ask B.B. to form a rescue team with me. I had only just met him, but I already knew that he was the only Pokemon I had ever met that I would trust to cover my back in any situation. It had to be him. I was thrilled when he agreed. It felt like destiny, the way the way we two strangers just seemed to work perfectly together. We grew closer by the day, through the good times and the bad, and it felt like everything was perfect, and just the way it was supposed to be… but then everything changed.

I'll never be able to forget that evening on the Hill of the Ancients…

" *Huh? W-why…? Why? I don't understand! Why do you have to leave? Didn't we… Aren't we friends?"*

" *Yes. You will always be my friend, Bullet. I will never forget you."*

" *Don't go, B.B.…."*

" *I'm blessed to have met you."*

" *I… What am I going to do when you're gone, B.B.?"*

" *I'm so very sorry. This is good-bye…"*

" *B.B.! Nooooo!"*

Watching my best friend dissolve into nothing more than a ball of light and fly off into the sunset that our world never would have seen, if not for him, I felt like I would die! The one who was most important to me, the one who I would do anything for, was gone! In that moment, I felt like it would have been better if Gengar had left us dead when we plummeted down from Sky Tower, instead of bringing our souls back to our mostly restored bodies. That way, nothing would have been able to separate B.B. and I ever again, not even the fact that he was born human.

Ever since that day, I've always been terrified of losing B.B.. Even if it seemed like a silly fear to him, I still felt uneasy whenever the two of us were apart. Being separated from B.B., I thought that that was the worst feeling, but this was even worse. Seeing him right beside

me, but feeling like he was so very far away, this was truly the worst feeling. I could read him far better than he thought I could. I could see that he was hurting, and I could see that he did not want me to know why.

When we received the Surf HM disc from Whiscash, I was ecstatic! This meant that we could finally go on a big exploration again! This could be just what I needed to get B.B. to talk to me about what was bothering him; he always opened up more when we were out in the field exploring or doing rescue work. It was like spending the day fighting side by side would strengthen our bond to the point where I could get past the walls that B.B. kept raised around himself. I don't know if he even realized it himself, but I sure did, and I was grateful for it.

It was settled. We had everything we needed ready to set out for Stormy Sea the following day. Team Sureshot would set out at sunup, with B.B., myself, and our other partner Blade, the Absol who had joined us during our time as fugitives and accompanied us to Sky Tower. I said goodnight to B.B. in front of our team base, like I always did. He muttered a goodnight and that he would be sleeping there at the base that night, then quickly turned and disappeared inside the base. I frowned and stared after him, but there was no sign that he would be leaving the base again until morning.

With a sigh, I turned and made my way back to my home in the Scorched Plains. I arrived at my little room, which was hidden away inside one of the cliffs surrounding the always burning plain, and went straight to bed. I settled into my nest of soft ashes, which were warmed by the hot rock all around them, and watched as the lights of the flames burning outside flickered across the ceiling of the little cave. As I grew hypnotized by the gentle lights and slowly drifted out of consciousness, I promised myself that, no matter what, somehow, someway, before I again slept in this bed, I would make B.B. talk to me. I would find out the truth.

Chapter 3

B.B. POV

I sat upon the cold ledge alongside of the long and winding trail which Bullet and I had taken, fleeing from the hoards of pursuers inside of Mt. Blaze. The glow of the molten lava that covered Mt. Blaze's slopes illuminated the skyline and blocked out the light of the stars. The resulting sky was inky black and heavy as it rested itself upon the barren landscape. The same heaviness had settled itself upon my heart, as I felt the overwhelming sense of shame at falling from the position of smalltime hero to hardcore criminal fugitive. The worst part may have been the strange sense of familiarity that came along with my sudden alienation those I trusted and cared about, or it could have been the fact that I wasn't alone, sitting there on that ledge. I turned and looked beside me to see my scruffy, bedraggled Cyndaquil partner. Bullet sat hunched over, staring tiredly back towards Mt. Blaze.

" *Mmm… The view's fantastic. See how small Mt. Blaze looks from here? We've come a really long way, haven't we? ...B.B.. Do you remember how hard it was to get across Mt. Blaze? I don't think too many Pokemon can get through there. And then we gave it our all to get out here. Do you know what I'm thinking? We've come so far, maybe there aren't any more Pokemon that can get to us."*

" *No. There are others."*

" *Oh? There's someone else? Well, who do you mean? …Oh, I get it. There's Alakazam. You're right. Alakazam's team should be able to get here. Yup! We don't have a choice. We have to keep going. I think we need to go somewhere no one else can get to. Let's be positive and keep moving."*

Bullet got up and walked past me, stopping when he realized that I hadn't followed him in the direction of the trail, and was still sitting on the ledge, staring off towards Mt. Blaze.

" *Huh? What's the matter? Aren't you coming, B.B.?"*

" But Bullet… Aren't you exhausted?"

"… Huh? Am I tired? They're chasing us down. We can't afford to rest. And… I told you already. I said I would go with you, B.B.. …Oh. Come on. No need for that long face. I'm fine. Let's go, B.B.! I'll go wherever you go!"

I smiled at my optimistic friend, and rose to my feet. Suddenly, the grinning Cyndaquil in front of me transformed into a fiery-eyed angel of a Quilava, who had a far different kind of smile on his face. Instead of continuing off down the mountain trail, Bullet stood up on his hind legs and strode up to me, placing his warm paws on my shoulders. The closeness of his amazing eyes floored me. They were mere inches away from mine, and they were filled with… was that… lust?

" B-Bullet?"

" Shh. Don't worry B.B., I trust you," Bullet purred seductively into my ear, before leaning in and kissing me.

WHAT? My eyes were wide as the full moon overhead, and as my mouth fell open in shock, Bullet's tongue slipped inside and began a sexy dance with my own. A chess club geek receiving a lap dance from a naked cheerleader couldn't be half as pleasantly surprised in that moment as I was! Bullet's tongue drew mine from my mouth to his, and he began to suck it. My eyes and heart simultaneously fluttered under the haze of lust that was covering my mind. Correction! No one, ever, in the history of the universe, had ever been anywhere near as ecstatically shocked as I was right now!

Bullet's paws wrapped around my wrists and began leading my paws down over his slender body. My claws curled of their own accord to run through the soft fur of his belly. Bullet immediately moaned such a sexy noise that I had never heard from him before, that all blood from my madly blushing face rushed south to my member, which was rising from its sheath faster than I would have even thought possible.

" B.B., please, touch me more," Bullet whined as he went to work suckling on my neck.

Those lustful eyes, that pleading voice, it was all too much for me, so when Bullet pressed himself up against me, and I felt that he was as hard as I was, all my thoughts stopped all together. I wanted him. I dragged my claws through the shiny green fur of his back, pressing in against his lower back to press him harder against me. Bullet gasped, through his arms around my neck, and began bucking wildly against me, little whimpers and moans leaving him with each thrust.

I leaned back and sat down on the ground with my legs spread and Bullet dry humping on top of me. Trusting him to keep up the friction, I moved on to the next step. I twisted my long, reptilian tongue around my claws, making sure to get them nice and wet. Bullet must have heard what I was doing, because his head pulled back and he stared at me with dazed, hungry eyes. His tongue slid out and tangled with mine, as they both moved over my paw, lubing my claws. Once I was satisfied, I pulled my paw out of the way and allowed our tongues to battle each other directly.

Bullet had continued thrusting throughout our makeout session, and I used one of his powerful backward thrusts as an opportunity to slide in the first long claw. Bullet's back made a perfect arch, and he screamed my name, sparks flashing across his widespread eyes. My curled claw had struck his prostate dead on, and I could feel his insides constricting around me in excitement.

" *Oh Arceus! Please B.B., again! Touch me there again! Harder!"*

I didn't hesitate. I couldn't. I slipped in another claw and stretched Bullet while curling my paw in such a way, that with every thrust, my claws were pressed hard against Bullet's prostate. Screaming echoed across the bleak backdrop as Bullet shuddered fitfully above me.

" *Please, oh Arceus, please B.B.! I need you! Please, make me come!"*

I was harder than I had ever been in my life, and far past the point of being able to stop. I pulled my claws from inside of him with a pop and a whine from Bullet. I sat up and watched as Bullet positioned himself, chest down, delicious ass up, and simmering crimson eyes

looking expectantly back at me. I leaned forward over him, twisted my claws up in the fur on his shoulders, and thrust my length into him in one quick thrust. A high pitched caterwaul burst forth from Bullet's lips, as his body spasmed and shook beneath me. I panted and groaned at the unbelievable tightness that was Bullet's ass. I looked down and was stunned by the sight. The gold light of the volcano and the silver light of the full moon danced together across mussed, sweaty, silken fur. My most beautiful angel twisted and writhed, crying out in ecstasy, impaled upon my cock. Those eyes glowed up towards me in the dim light, until all I could see was that brilliant red. I thrust into Bullet, fast and hard, moaning deep and low in counterpoint to his high keening. My reddened vision continued to spread until it was all that I was aware of, an overwhelming sense of pleasure and that fog of magnificent scarlet.

My eyes fluttered open, only to squint closed again, as they were met with the harsh rose glow of sunrise. No, that was wrong, that wasn't the red I had just been drowning in, the absolutely perfect ruby which made Perfect Apples on the tree seem dull and blood seem cold and black in comparison. Then I turned my head away from the glare of the sun and found that red that I had been searching for. Bullet was standing right beside my bed, gawking at me with those eyes that were the same as my dream, and blushing as bright as a tomato berry.

Bullet POV

I rose from my nest of ashes just before dawn, excited to set out. I quickly cleaned myself up and gather up the supplies I had prepared the day before. I set out for our team base from Scorched Plains just as the first rays of sun were poking out over the horizon, eating an apple as I went. I was filled with conviction to make this mission a success on all fronts. We would return with vast amounts of experience and treasure, and even more importantly, I would return having repaired my relationship with B.B..

I arrived at the base before Blade, and B.B. wasn't in his usual spot out in the garden, so I decided to go in and see if he was awake yet. I walked into the still dark base, calling my partner's name, but getting no response. As sunlight began to fill up the large room, I noticed B.B.'s sleeping form lying in his overflowing nest of soft hay.

I saw him tossing and turning in his sleep, and I could hear him moaning and groaning from across the room. It looked like he was having a nightmare, so I went over to wake him up. However, when I got to his bedside, I saw that his dream was far from a nightmare.

I blushed so hot that, for a second, I thought that my flames had ignited. When I got to the bedside and looked down at my friend, his face was flushed; his smooth, green skin was slicked with sweat; and his pride and glory was standing at full attention, quivering, and dripping from the tip. Oh my Arceus! B.B. was huge! He was thicker than and almost twice as long as I was! Where did he hide that thing? More importantly, why was I looking? Why could I not pull my attention away from my sleeping best friend's junk? What was wrong with me?

I started to excuse myself and back away to go wait in the garden, but then B.B. gave a loud groan that made me jump, and I was paralyzed as I watched as his hips started to buck up and off the bed. First, my mouth went dry, and then, I started to drool uncontrollably. I couldn't even blink as my gaze traced over powerful muscles that clenched and released under satin smooth skin, as B.B. thrust himself deep into his dream girl.

Who was she? I hadn't heard from B.B. or seen any sign from him that he liked someone. Maybe this was why he had been acting so off lately? But he seemed so distant, not just like he was wallowing over girl troubles. If that were it, I'm sure he would have told me! If no one else, he would have told me! But… what if it wasn't as simple as that? What if… what if this dream girl wasn't a Pokemon? What if she was human? What if she was B.B.'s love from back before he came to this world? Oh Arceus, did B.B…. regret staying? Was that why he had been so far away? Did he change his mind, and want to go back to being human to be with the girl he loved?

…To be loved by B.B. that deeply, to have all of his affection, even when you're worlds apart. To have him worked up into such frenzy, making love to you in his dreams, that girl was lucky. Wait! What am I saying? Did I just seriously feel jealous of the subject of my best friend's wet dream? I mean, sure, I find B.B. attractive and cool and all, who wouldn't, but I'm a guy! Guys aren't supposed to get hard staring at their best friend's dick. Oh my Arceus, I *was* getting hard!

My paws slowly started to move downwards of their own accord. I gasped as my paws started to tease the pink tip of my malehood as it started to rise out of its sheath. One paw sped up as it rubbed around the head of my cock, and the other fell lower to fondle my furry balls. My breathing sped up as my paws continued their work and my eyes kept drifting over B.B., thrusting away, sweating and dripping precum. Suddenly, B.B. lifted himself fully off of the bed and came hard across his heaving chest. Oh Arceus, that was the hottest thing I had ever seen! I was so close!

"B.B.…"

B.B.'s eyes blinked open into a beam of intense morning sunlight, and my heart stopped. I couldn't let him catch me like this! I quickly took a few steps back and dropped down onto all fours, so that he wouldn't be able to see my little problem, nor I his. B.B. looked over, saw me, and propped himself up on his elbow with wide eyes and a blush across his face. I tried to act like there was nothing awkward about this situation by smiling, asking him if he was ready to head out, and praying to Arceus that the fact that my whole body was steaming wasn't as noticeable to him as it was to me.

B.B. quickly covered himself, looked the other way, and muttered out something about meeting me outside after he cleaned up a bit. I nodded and dismissed myself quickly, hurrying awkwardly outside and around to the small section of the garden that was hidden behind the base's main building. I had to get rid of this before B.B. came back! I stroked myself hard and fast, the image of B.B.'s orgasm filling my mind. I came hard into one paw, while the other covered my mouth to stifle my voice. What was going on with me? Getting hard and then jerking off and coming to my best friend? This was wrong! So wrong! But I couldn't think about it now, B.B. and Blade would be waiting for me, so I quickly braced myself and jumped into a small pond in the back of the garden.

I walked up to Blade, who was waiting out front, down by the path, and was greeted by a look of bewilderment.

"Good morning, Bullet. Why are you soaked?"

"Morning, Blade. It's a funny story, actually. I got here early, so I

thought I would hang out in the garden for awhile, but I slipped on patch of wet grass and fell into a pond. Hahaha!"

I continued to laugh self-consciously and wipe at my wet fur. Blade shrugged his shoulders and made some comment or another about me needing to be more aware of my surroundings, but I wasn't listening, because, while Blade was talking, B.B. had walked up to us, fresh and holding our treasure bag across his shoulder.

"You sure you're okay, Bullet? I'm not sure it's the best idea for you to be starting out a mission looking like a half-drowned rat. Oh wait, I guess you kind of are, aren't you?"

I smirked at the good natured jab. That was the most normal I had seen B.B. in days, and I was relieved for it. I could put all the embarrassment of this morning behind us, and just chalk it up to some bizarre planetary alignment thing or whatever else Xatu was always going on about. For now, I would just focus on the mission, and I was sure that everything would just go back to normal.

As we set off down the road out of town, B.B. put his hand on my back to stop me. I froze, turned around, and looked at him questioningly. He reached into the treasure bag he was carrying and pulled out a piece of royal blue cloth.

"It's a Pass Scarf. If we're heading for the Stormy Sea, I would feel better if you would wear it."

I was going to object, and say that I didn't need any unfair help like that. However, when I looked into his face and saw nothing in his expression but sincere concern, I couldn't seem to find it in my heart to deny him his request. I took the scarf and attempted to put it on. Attempted was definitely the appropriate word. Even though I had decided to put the morning's events behind me, my heart was still doing little flips inside my chest, and it was making me all thumbs. B.B. laughed at me, and I scowled, I did not pout!

"Here, let me help you."

B.B. took the knotted fabric from around my neck, smoothed it out, and tied it gently and skillfully around my neck.

"It suits you. Thank you for wearing it."

I blushed a little, a lot, and looked away, "Yeah, sure. Whatever makes you happy."

B.B. gave a pleased smile, patted me on the shoulder, and walked off after Blade, who was waiting for us on top of a boulder a little ways down the road. I watched as Blade hopped down and fell into step behind B.B., who walked with the confidence of a natural born leader that even a recluse like Blade couldn't ignore. I followed from the back, beaming just a little with admiration for my friend.

I had only grown more and more respect for him since the day we met. Now, standing beside him made me feel like I could do anything, while at the same time it made me feel happy enough that I could melt. In my eyes, B.B. was the most perfect Pokemon ever. …But… what if that wasn't what he wanted? What if B.B. really did want to be human again? What would I do? …What could I do?

Chapter 4

Bullet POV

Ah, the sea was so dazzling! The harsh light from the sun directly overhead sparkled like a million diamonds across the water's surface. The foam of the waves beating against the shore tickled between my toes, and the cool sea breeze danced across my fur. I couldn't help but smile and laugh at the moment of peace that the scene had settled upon my mind. I looked up at B.B., wanting to share the moment of happiness with him, and my heart jumped into my throat.

B.B. stood with his eyes closed and a gentle smile on his face, enjoying the warmth of the sun on his skin. The breeze picked up, causing the long leaf on his head to whip like a flag in the wind. B.B. opened his eyes slightly and stared out into the vast expanse of blue that stretched before us. He sighed and rolled his shoulders back, before reaching into the treasure bag and beginning to speak.

"Well, standing here on this beach won't get us any closer to our goal. We better keep moving," B.B. looked back and forth between Blade and I, "Who wants to do the honors?"

I suddenly realized... that I had no idea how we were supposed to use the Dive HM to reach Stormy Sea! In all my excitement, that one extremely important detail had completely slipped my mind! I could feel my face heating up, and I could tell from the way B.B. quirked his eyebrow when he looked at me that my blushing was giving away my foolish mistake. I expected him to laugh at me and make fun of my carelessness, but instead, he simply turned back to Blade.

"Shall I handle it, then?"

Blade nodded in agreement, and stepped back, gesturing for B.B. to proceed. My curiosity piqued, I watched closely as B.B. waded waist-deep into the ocean water, clutching the HM disc in his paw. He placed the disc atop the water's surface, and spoke in a loud, clear voice.

"Dive."

At B.B.'s command, the disc began to shine, and the water began to tremble and shift, bending back against the natural waves. I watched in wide-eyed amazement as the water solidified beneath B.B.'s feet, stretching up to form walls around him. It wasn't like ice, though. It looked like a giant bubble, but it felt rubbery to the touch, kind of like poking an angry jigglypuff... not that I would know what that felt like...

Once Blade and I had climbed inside the strange Jigglypuff Dive Bubble and stood beside B.B., who was kneeling down on one knee, with his paw still on the disc, the waves behind us changed direction and we were swiftly pushed out to sea. We quickly sank beneath the waves, moving swiftly through the murky waters. For several minutes, all I could do was stare wide-eyed at the thin walls that separated us from the angry, twisting currents that propelled our little submarine along. What would happen if the bubble were to burst? Would you run out of air before you could find your way back up to the surface? Would you even survive being tossed about in those wild currents? Apparently, my nervousness didn't go unnoticed by the other two.

"You don't have to worry so much. This vessel is sturdier than it looks. We are in no danger."

Blade wore such an expression of complete certainty, that I really couldn't question him. Besides, his instincts were always spot-on, so if something bad was gonna happen, surely Blade would be able to feel it coming. Feeling reassured and just a bit sheepish at my senseless worrying, I nodded and flashed Blade a small appreciative smile.

"Just don't go burning your way out. The last thing we need to be wasting sunlight doing is fishing you out of the ocean before you drown."

I was startled by the hint of bitterness I heard behind B.B.'s teasing tone. I looked up at his face, only to see a blank, serious expression as he paid no mind to either me or Blade, instead focusing his attention on directing us through the waters in the direction of the

spot that Lombre had marked on our map as being the entrance to the Stormy Sea. That face gave nothing away, had I just imagined that spark of hurt in his voice? I didn't think so, but now was clearly not the time or place to start interrogating B.B., so I just added it to the ever growing list of answers that I was going to have to get out of him before this mission was over.

Eventually, after a few hours, that felt more like days, we pulled up at the entrance to a cave that was worn into a massive iceberg. As we were approaching, we had seen that the ocean currents were holding this figure steadily in place, even as the walls of it shifted and creaked as the waves beat against it. Blade and I quickly dismounted our Jigglypuff, taking careful steps onto the slippery ice of the underwater cave floor. B.B. followed close behind us, plucking the HM disc from its place embedded in the wall of the bubble as he stepped out on the ice. Once the disc was removed, the Jigglypuff Bubble quivered and dissolved back into the water it was made from, and the twisting currents that had propelled us faded away into the natural flow of the sea. After a brief moment of staring back into the dark blue depths, I turned to see B.B. and Blade gazing intently into the depths of the ice cave.

"This is it," B.B. was all business as he stepped forward into the cave, "No turning back now. Let's see how far down Stormy Sea really goes."

"Right," Blade followed with a nod.

Feeling all the adrenaline and excitement of exploration swelling up inside of me, I charged forward to walk beside B.B., "Yeah! Let's do it! I can't wait to see how much treasure we can find in this place!"

"If the legends are to be believed, then we should find plenty."

I gave B.B. a playful shove as we began descending down a tunnel into the dungeon, "I bet you I can find something good before you do!"

B.B. looked at me with a smirk and scoffed, "You're on, wet rat. Let's see you try."

I charged forward down the path, grinning from ear to ear with just how B.B. that comment had been. No matter how weird B.B. was acting, at the end of the day, he was still my best friend, and I would always be able to bring him back to himself, one way or another. …I was just going to have to believe that would be enough.

B.B. POV

My day had already started off bad enough, with my rude awakening with Bullet at my bedside. The last thing that I needed today was for Blade to suddenly act out of character and decide to be all *chatty* . Bullet was following behind us a little farther back down the road to the ocean, just barely out of earshot, and *apparently* , that was all the invitation that Blade needed to start on a conversation that was anything but innocent.

"So, what exactly happened with you and Bullet, this morning?"

"What?!" I proceeded to trip over my own feet and almost choke on my own tongue at the same time.

Blade shook my reaction off, seemingly undisturbed, "It's just that you two seemed really tense when we met up this morning. Plus, I don't really believe Bullet's whole story about randomly slipping on some wet grass and winding up in a pond. So… what happened?"

Honestly ! Why did this guy have to be so damn observant all the time?! "Look nothing happened, Blade, okay? I just haven't been sleeping well lately, and Bullet woke me up when he came in at the crack of dawn this morning. So any tension you were sensing, that was all it was."

Blade stared blankly at me, "You know, you're a pretty good liar. I almost believed that story for a second, but you're just trying a little too hard to act natural."

"What's that supposed to mean?"

"It means that I can keep a secret, and as a teammate, you should trust me a little more… Even if you asked me to keep it from Bullet."

My mouth just gaped like a magikarp, no words coming out. How

could this guy always hit the nail on the head out of nowhere? Thank goodness, Bullet's convenient sense of timing kicked in, and he came bounding up next to us, with that adorable signature smile on his face.

"Whatcha talking about, guys?"

I still hadn't regained the ability of speech, and so was *very* relieved when Blade responded to Bullet's question, "We were just discussing if the weather would pose any difficulty for us, once we reach the ocean. It shouldn't."

"Oh, okay!" Bullet sniffed the air and laughed happily, before charging forward, "I can smell the ocean, guys! Come on!"

I glanced sideways at Blade, "Thanks for that."

"Like I said, you can trust me to keep a secret."

I watched as Blade trotted off behind Bullet, feeling a major headache forming. Now both Bullet *and* Blade were getting far too close to finding out my secret. It's not like I didn't trust the two of them! I just… couldn't take the chance. Of losing my team, of losing my friends… of losing Bullet. It just wasn't a risk I could afford to take.

After we had made it out into the water, I noticed Bullet in my peripheral vision, looking distinctly uncomfortable and a bit green beneath his fur. Before I could say anything to soothe my friend's frazzled nerves, Blade jumped in to do it for me.

"You don't have to worry so much. This vessel is sturdier than it looks. We are in no danger."

Damn that Blade for getting Bullet to look at him like that! With that bashful little smile that was so innocent and a blush that was as bright as his eyes. …Damn! Why was I getting so jealous of Blade?! Just because he was being a good teammate? Shit! I was being ridiculous, but I couldn't seem to help myself, no matter how hard I tried.

"Just don't go burning your way out. The last thing we need to be

wasting sunlight doing is fishing you out of the ocean before you drown."

Great ! I caught sight of Bullet's surprised and slightly hurt face at the edge of my vision, and wanted to kick myself. Now, he thinks I'm mad at him. What is wrong with me today?! Why can't I just act normal? I guess the close calls of the morning had really taken a toll on my self control. Well, in that case, I would just have to stay focused on the mission. I could deal with everything else once we were all safely home, when things had had a chance to cool off some.

As we began our descent into the Stormy Sea, Bullet at the head of the pack, running into the darkness, laughing with a huge, excited grin on his face, I was hit again with the sickening sense of fear for the quilava's safety. I began running to keep up with him, barely noticing the clicking of Blade's claws behind me on the ice, as he kept pace with the both of us.

As we exited the tunnel into the first open chamber, standing in the shallow sea water that covered the floor, we were immediately dive-bombed by a flock of furious wingull. As we began shooting them down, I caught sight of the flashing red lights of a school of tentacool heading in our direction. Even as we finished the last of them off and started moving deeper into the dungeon, I couldn't help the sinking feeling in my stomach that this was gonna be a lot tougher than we had initially thought. I couldn't stop myself from glancing at Bullet, as he lit the way down a dark hallway. I would protect him, no matter what. As we moved out into the next dank, heavily shadowed chamber, we were met by the hissing cries of several furious omanyte. Ugh, I could tell this day was only gonna get worse.

Chapter 5

Bullet POV

We had been steadily making our way deeper and deeper into the depths of the Stormy Sea. Other than the occasional distraction from the sounds of shifting ice flows, my attention had remained focused on picking out enemies hidden in the shadows. There were more enemies which were more violent than we had ever expected. My original plan to make conversation with B.B. as we went had quickly been derailed. Now, I was just biding my time, hoping that we would be able to safely make camp sometime soon, and be able to make casual conversation without risk of being attacked by one of the long range water attacks that had been plaguing us all day. It was all I could do to keep my fur lying flat with the frustration prickling over my skin like needles. As important as this exploration was for Team Sureshot, I was far more concerned with what was going on with B.B.. This delay was becoming more and more of an itch that I couldn't quite scratch. The need to once again be able to understand what was going through my best friend's head was growing more intense with every hour that passed with us wandering nearly blindly under so much ice and water, that if I stopped worrying long enough to think about it, I probably would have had a panic attack. Fortunately, or maybe unfortunately, my mind didn't seem to have enough room to worry about that. All that I could think about was B.B.. Why had he seemed so cold today? Was he really unhappy being a member of Team Sureshot? Was he unhappy… staying here with me?

"Bullet! Watch out!"

I turned quickly to see a blast of water flying at me from out of the darkness. I saw B.B. running at me from the opposite direction, fear clear on his face. Time seemed to slow down as I watched the attack collide with my pass scarf, bounce off, and hit B.B., sending him sliding across the wet ice floor, straight towards a gap in the frozen wall. I felt more than heard the scream tear from my throat as I watched B.B. fall through the gaping hole, into the raging currents

wrapped around the dungeon. I felt frozen to the spot. No! It couldn't be true! B.B. couldn't be gone! I watched as Blade flew across the floor, diving through the gap in the wall after B.B.. I rushed forward towards the wall, blasting the seadra that had fired the hydro pump shot, as I skidded to a stop in front of the wall. My eyes fell immediately upon Blade's horn, driven into the side of the ice wall. I reached forward and grabbed hold, pulling Blade up out of the churning wall of water. As his head surfaced, he began clawing his way back into the dungeon with his hind claws, and I watched as he pulled B.B.'s limp form with him out of the black torrent.

"Oh Arceus! Are you guys okay? B.B.? B.B.?! B.B., can you hear me?"

"Calm down, Bullet," Blade managed to cough out, "B.B. is gonna be fine, but we need to find a safe place to make camp and get him warmed up. Right now."

I could feel myself shaking all over, but I managed to nod and help Blade get to his feet, and carry B.B. towards the center of the colossal iceberg. I searched the solid ice walls for a fissure big enough for us to use as a shelter. Finally, I found one, and pulled B.B. inside the small cave. I quickly lit a small fire, and laid B.B. down beside it, pressing up against his other side, laying my whole body against his, desperate to get his stiff body warm again. I looked across the fire to see Blade settling down to dry his fur beside the flames.

"Are you okay, Blade? That must have taken a huge toll on you, too."

"I'll be fine, Bullet. I'm far more used to the cold than B.B. is. I used to live in the mountains north of Frosty Forest, remember? I'm accustomed to harsh conditions and bitter cold."

"Thank you, Blade. I don't know what else I can say."

"Don't thank me, Bullet. B.B. is my teammate, too. He is also my friend, as well."

"Blade…"

"Before I met you and B.B., I was used to being looked at with respect, fear, mistrust, or a combination of the three. As an Absol, I had become accustomed to being looked upon with the superstitious eyes of others. I was always alone, and I never thought that I would need friends to make myself feel complete. Then, I joined forces with Team Sureshot, in order to save the world from Armageddon. I never thought about making friends, but eventually, the two of you became the first two friends I ever had. Even after time passed and I made more friends, you and B.B. have always remained my closest friends. …I would do anything for the two of you, because you are my friends."

I was in shock at the speech the normally quiet and stoic absol had just given. I had never realized just how much the team had come to mean to him. As tears welled up in my eyes, I said the only thing that I could think of in my frazzled state of mind, "You're our friend, too, ya know? That's why, we'd do the same thing for you."

Blade's perpetually blank expression lifted into a tiny semblance of a smile, "Try and get some sleep, Bullet. We can figure out what to do later, after a good rest."

"Right."

I watched as Blade settled down to sleep, before turning my attention back to the slowly warming body beside me. Thank Arceus, B.B. hadn't drowned, and he was going to be just fine. I couldn't stop myself as tears poured heavily down my face onto cool, green skin, as my emotions continued to whip about inside my head. Residual fear, relief, self-loathing at my own weakness, and something else, something unbearably warm wrapped themselves tightly around my heart, sitting heavily in my chest. This grovyle beside me was the most important thing in my life, and because of my own mistake, I had almost lost him for good. If I had thought before that the thought of B.B. leaving this world behind to become human again was the worst feeling in the world, I knew now that that was far from the truth. The thought of going on living while B.B. was dead, that was far worse. If he became human, then at least I would still know that he was alive somewhere, even if it was without me, but if he was dead, if he existed nowhere, then what purpose would life have if he didn't exist in it? Trembling from the depressing

thoughts that were strangling me, I cuddled closer to B.B.'s side, clinging to him with all of my strength. I slowly cried myself to sleep, my head pillowed upon B.B.'s chest and my arms wrapped around his torso.

Where was I? What was this place? I was surrounded by a thick white fog, wandering through a strange scene of grimy, stone pathways and towering buildings. Harsh, blaring noises echoed out of the mist, and the bitter smells of acrid smoke and rotten fruit clogged my nose and made my eyes water. What kind of place was this? Surely nothing could really live here? The fog only grew thicker as I wandered through the cold labyrinth of towers, forcing me to resist the urge to vomit and scent my way forward. Wait, what was that? Beneath the overpowering reek that I had first noticed, there was a familiar and far more pleasant odor. B.B.? It was! It was B.B.'s scent! He had to be here somewhere.

I took off running blindly through the confusing maze, thinking of nothing but finding that face that went with that well-known aroma that was like a shining light in the befuddling darkness of this alien place. I whipped around corner after corner, speeding up as I heard the murmur of the unmistakable voice of my best friend up ahead. The twisting tunnels of stone and glass let out into a small park filled with comforting, sturdy trees. I followed that voice forward into the park, peeking around tree after tree, quickly growing frantic in my desire to see the yellow eyes that were filling my every thought. I finally reached the far end of the garden and stopped dead, not believing what I was seeing.

About ten feet away, resting peacefully at the base of the largest tree in the park, was a man with long red hair pulled back in a ponytail, and deep brown eyes. He was dressed in a faded green jacket and matching cargo pants, with red leather gloves and shoes. He was human, but that voice and that scent were undeniable. This man was B.B., and he wasn't alone. In his lap, sat a beautiful girl with shoulder-length black hair and sparkly green eyes, who was dressed in a yellow dress and leggings with shoes that matched the bright orange ribbon in her hair.

I watched in stunned silence as B.B. wrapped his arms around the girl and whispered in her ear, giving her a warm, loving smile as she

responded with a fit of giggles. I could feel a lump forming in my throat, and my heart twisting violently inside my chest. B.B. had never looked at me like that… Wait, was I… jealous *of that girl? As much as I wanted to argue against the insanity of that idea, I couldn't deny, in that moment, how much I wanted that to be* me *sitting in B.B.'s lap with him beaming at me with such affection in his eyes. I wanted it. I wanted it so badly, that I couldn't stand to stand here watching this anymore. I spun around and ran away from the unwanted sight. I could feel a flush spreading across my skin, and I was crying again. I couldn't stop myself from sobbing as I ran, not caring where I was going, overcome with such a feeling of yearning that I had never felt before.*

I jolted awake, feeling the tears weighing heavily in my fur. I looked around quickly to find everything was just as it was supposed to be. The fire had shrunk down slightly, but it was still burning good and hot. Blade was sleeping peacefully, his fur now as dry as could be expected this far underwater. B.B. had warmed up, and sometime while I was asleep, his arm had come up to wrap around my shoulders, holding me to his chest.

I gazed at the serenely sleeping face that was so close to mine, and was once again hit by that same sense of yearning from my dream. I had always thought that B.B. was handsome, but I guess I had never gotten such a close look that really let me appreciate just how beautiful he was. His skin, smooth as satin, still managed to carry a soft glow, like sunlight passing through emeralds. The sloping angles of his face, the tight, lean muscles that covered his body, and the silky scales stretching across his stomach drew my eyes up and down over his form, and made me hyper conscious of how close our bodies were pressed together, from our entangled legs to my head pressed under his chin.

I felt so hot, I had to check myself again to see if I had lit my flame. I hadn't. It wasn't fire, but B.B. that was making me feel this way, and staring down at the perfect face of my sleeping friend, I couldn't contradict the quickly growing familiar feeling of warmth in my chest. Love. I didn't know how or why, but I had somehow fallen for my best friend. As my mind accepted the fact that my heart hand already declared as final, I once again felt a cold feeling in the pit of

my stomach that just felt so *wrong* in such close capacity with the fire in my chest. The memory of my dream flooded back full force, the memory of the all-consuming grief I had felt seeing B.B. with someone else in his arms. That was right. B.B. already had someone who was precious to him. There was no way my feelings for my friend would ever be returned.

B.B. POV

"Bullet! Watch out!"

I had seen the bullet of water screaming out of the dark corners of the chamber towards Bullet, who remained blissfully unaware of the impending danger, and charged towards him as fast as my long strides could carry me through the shallow water. I had to protect him! Nothing else ran through my mind as panic drove me forward. It was too late for me to change course when the shot ricocheted off of the pass scarf that I had insisted Bullet wear, and came barreling straight for me. I nearly lost consciousness as all the air was knocked from my lungs as the water struck me hard on my chest, sending me flying. Next thing I knew, I felt the frigid grip of sea water closing over my head. My eyes flew open as I struggled to dig my claws into the ice wall and pull myself back into the chamber before the current could sweep me away. As I felt my need for air growing and my strength slipping away, I suddenly felt strong legs wrap around me and a strong body press me against the ice. Blade. My vision began fading to black as suddenly, I felt us lurch forward as Blade and I were slowly pulled from the violent water. Bullet, and here I thought that I was gonna be the one protecting him.

I felt my back slam into the still, thin layer of water and then the hard ice floor. My breath came in a series of gulps and gasps, and my awareness was shaky at best. Sounding like it was coming from somewhere far away, I heard Bullet's voice calling my name.

"B.B.? B.B.?! B.B., can you hear me?"

Yes. I tried to respond, to comfort the frantic, terror-filled voice, but I couldn't get my body to respond. My eyes wouldn't open and my mouth wouldn't move. All I could do was lie there and shake as the bone-deep cold ripped through my tired body.

"Calm down, Bullet. B.B. is gonna be fine, but we need to find a safe place to make camp and get him warmed up. Right now."

That voice was a relief. Not only was Blade okay after diving in after me, but he was still calm enough to look after Bullet while I was incapacitated. My limited awareness faded out for awhile, and when it focused back in, I could feel the warmth of a fire nearby and the even greater warmth of a body pressed up against me.

"Thank you, Blade. I don't know what else I can say."

I seemed to have woken up in the middle of a conversation between my two teammates. Since I still couldn't find the strength to join in, I simply focused on listening attentively… or attentively as was possible while the ones talking thought I was asleep.

"Don't thank me, Bullet. B.B. is my teammate, too. He is also my friend, as well."

"Blade…"

"Before I met you and B.B., I was used to being looked at with respect, fear, mistrust, or a combination of the three. As an Absol, I had become accustomed to being looked upon with the superstitious eyes of others. I was always alone, and I never thought that I would need friends to make myself feel complete. Then, I joined forces with Team Sureshot, in order to save the world from Armageddon. I never thought about making friends, but eventually, the two of you became the first two friends I ever had. Even after time passed and I made more friends, you and B.B. have always remained my closest friends. …I would do anything for the two of you, because you are my friends."

I felt choked up at hearing such a speech from Blade. Then, I felt a stab as I remembered how I had blown him off earlier that same day that he had risked his life to save mine. I was determined to make it up to him somehow, once I could stand up on my own again.

"You're our friend, too, ya know? That's why, we'd do the same thing for you."

Glad that Bullet had responded for both of us, I drifted off to sleep again with peace of mind. Bullet was safe, and so was Blade, and I would be okay, too, after a good, long rest.

I was sitting at the base of my favorite tree in the park that I would sleep in after my parents threw me out. I was human. I was lonely. I was sad. Why was I here again? The reeking city was just as I had remembered it, noisy and bitter. There had never been any sense of love or happiness in this place, and now was no exception.

Suddenly, I heard a sniffling sound and looked up. I saw a boy standing about ten feet with tears running down his cheeks. He had tousled black hair that hung down over top of his massive glasses. He wore a navy blue button down shirt with the sleeves rolled up to show off his lean, muscled arms; black jeans that clung flatteringly to his legs; and a black tie and dress shoes. I already had a gut feeling, but it was confirmed for certain when the boy lifted his head from staring at his feet to look at me with his big, wet, red eyes.

" *Bullet."*

The boy wiped his eyes and spoke with a wavering voice, "Why, B.B.? I don't understand. Why her? Why couldn't I be the one to make you happy?"

I stared at him, shocked and confused. Then, I looked down to see a strange girl with black hair sleeping with her head in my lap. What was going on?

" *I know you only see me as a friend, but I can't stand it! Seeing you… with* her *! It's too much! It's…"*

I threw the nameless stranger off of my lap, dashed forward, and threw my arms around Bullet, pulling him tight against me. The boy crumpled into my shoulder, weeping into my neck. I rubbed his back and ran my fingers through his silky hair, trying to soothe the distraught angel.

" *You damn fool. Don't you know that there is no one else in my eyes other than you?"*

"*… Really?"*

"' *Really,' he says! Obviously! I can hardly stand it, how much I love you, and don't you forget it!"*

Bullet laughed happily, hugging me tight, before pulling back to smile at me with red eyes that absolutely shone with the love and joy in them.

" *I love you, too, B.B.."*

I blinked awake to find myself inside a small ice cave, lying next to a small campfire. I glanced down to see Bullet, clinging to me for dear life with his head pillowed on my chest. I smiled warmly down at the sleeping seraph, wrapping my arm gently around his shoulders. He nuzzled into my neck, mumbling in his sleep. Arceus, that was cute! I couldn't stop the smile from splitting my face as my eyes wandered over the most beautiful creature my eyes had ever seen. I could feel my mind slipping back to sleep again, so I let my head fall back and my mind wander. My gaze traced across the seaweed trapped inside the walls and ceiling of the cavern as I daydreamed. I couldn't help but think about how great it would have been if that dream had been real, if Bullet and I could have lied here cuddling like this, both us feeling the same love for each other. Don't be silly; there is no way Bullet could ever feel that way towards me. I drifted off to sleep, the memory of Bullet's voice being the last thing I heard.

" *I love you, too, B.B.."*

Chapter 6

Bullet POV

I awoke to the sound of clawed feet shuffling about over the floor of the ice cave, and an icy chill that was quickly working its way through my thin fur and deep into my tired body. Apparently, crying in your sleep doesn't do much good for getting a good restful night's sleep. As my weary brain slowly started to clear, I realized why I was suddenly so cold. Where was B.B.? I jolted awake and started looking around, frantically scanning the dim cave. I took a deep breath of relief as my eyes found the familiar green figure sorting through our treasure bag on the opposite side of the now extinguished fire pit, looking back at me with a quirked eyebrow and an amused smirk.

"Good morning, sleeping beauty. About ready to get going? If we can match the pace we were keeping yesterday, and avoid any more mishaps, we should be able to reach the ocean floor by nightfall."

"Is that really… I mean… are you sure… ya know… that you're feeling up to it? Don't you think that it might be better to rest more after… what happened yesterday…?" I could feel my face burning, as my eyes fell to the floor and my tongue finally gave up on making sense of the jumbled mess of thoughts that it was desperately trying to form into words.

B.B. shook my concern off with a wave of his paw, "What, are you kidding? I'm not about to be put out of commission by something like that! I'll remind you that this isn't exactly my first brush with death, and once you get used to it, you tend to bounce back pretty quickly. So what if I'm a little bit battered? It's not like we haven't dealt with that before, either."

Blade padded up beside B.B. before speaking, "We've already come this far. It would be foolish to give up now, particularly since neither B.B. nor I are seriously injured. We will both be just fine, Bullet."

I just looked back and forth between their two faces, both wearing identical adamant expressions, before giving up with a nod, knowing that no argument I made was going to change either one of their minds. I kept staring at the ground as I heard footsteps making their way around the campfire. I jumped slightly as I felt B.B.'s paw land lightly on top of my head. My eyes grew wide and any blood that hadn't been coloring my face before now made that its main objective, as B.B. ruffled his claws through the fur between my ears. A shudder rippled down my spine as B.B. leaned down and spoke softly in my ear.

"Don't worry, Bullet. Every one of us is going to make it home safe from this mission, I promise. You know I would never make a promise that I couldn't keep."

I had never heard B.B. speak with a voice like that before. His voice was warm and soft, but completely serious, without even a hint of teasing to it. I hadn't even known that B.B. was capable of sounding like that, but hearing it now, humming so close to my ear, I felt like it was more B.B. than any other tone I had ever heard him use. It sounded so sweet that I just knew that I would melt and give in to anything he said, as long as he spoke to me like that.

"…Thank you, B.B.," I forced out past the lump that had formed in my throat, "I do trust you… always."

B.B.'s paw froze on top of my head, and I stopped breathing as that voice murmured once again in my ear, "That's why you are my invaluable partner."

With that, B.B. had turned and crossed over to the treasure bag once again. He quickly finished arranging the last of the items before handing the bag over to Blade and signaling for us to move out. Forcing the columns of jelly that my legs had become to turn back into flesh and bone, I followed the others as we made our way through the twisting tunnel that had separated our cave from the rest of the chamber.

I stopped dead as B.B. lifted his paw to hold us back and pointed out the shadowy forms of enemies hunched in a circle around us, just waiting for their chance to strike. B.B. gave Blade a meaningful look

before squeezing past him, allowing him to move to the front. My heart pounded in my chest as I suddenly found myself pressed against the grovyle in the tight passageway.

"Get ready."

I was so distracted that I probably would have been left standing there, if not for B.B.'s whispered reminder to stay focused. I looked forward again just in time to see Blade fire a massive shock wave across the water drenched room into the hoard of enemies. With the screeches and screams of surprise and anger echoing of the ice, we shot forward out of the tunnel, charging at a dead sprint away from the furious pokemon.

Running as fast as I could manage with the shallow sea water tugging at my paws, I hardly blinked as my eyes remained locked on B.B. right in front of me. I could tell that he was far from full strength, but his strides were still powerful and breathing was even. I pushed myself harder, working my way up beside B.B.. This time, there was no way I was going to let anyone hurt B.B. because of my mistake. I would prove that I deserved to be his *invaluable partner* .

When the hours of running and fighting had finally given way to a moment of calm, we all stopped to catch our breath and tend our wounds before moving forward.

"How much… farther… do we have… to go?" I panted.

"We should be almost there. If our information was correct, then that should be then entrance to the bottom chamber," B.B. pointed over his shoulder to a downward sloping path into the inky darkness.

"…We'd best be on our guard, though. I sense great power coming from down there, and whatever the source of it is, I doubt it will be happy to see us."

Looking at the way Blade seemed to display complete seriousness with every hair in his pelt, I didn't doubt for a second that we were in for quite a fight. I stood up on my hind legs and faced B.B. with a grin on my face and determination in my eyes.

"So what's the battle plan, partner?"

A flash of something like affection passed across B.B.'s face, before his expression fell into a mirror image of my own, "Whatever is down there, I think it's safe to assume that it is a water type. I don't know of any fossil pokemon that live underwater and would be strong enough to get Blade worked up like this. Going with that assumption, I'll focus on close range offense, Blade will stick with long range offense, and Bullet, I want you to cover our backs. You'll carry the bag, heal any injuries if one of us gets hurt, and fire off a shot if you see a good opening, but don't take any unnecessary risks. Visibility is gonna be terrible down there, I can tell, and we are going to be sunk if we don't have someone as a lookout. Got it?"

Blade nodded immediately, and as much as I want to object, I couldn't argue with B.B.'s logic. I agreed with a nod as well, before slinging the bag over my shoulder. Blade started towards makeshift stairs of ice, and B.B. turned to me with focus clear on his face.

"Remember, your job relies almost entirely upon stealth. Stick to the shadows as best you can; when you speak, be sure to move; and don't light your fire unless it is absolutely necessary."

"Got it, you can count on me."

"I know I can."

B.B.'s eyes glowed warm for a brief second, and then he was all business again, rushing ahead to lead the way in front of Blade, down the dark stairway. I braced my nerves before slipping down into the gloom, careful to let my footsteps move quickly, but still fall completely silent down the ice. Without any firelight to see by, I strained my ears to find my way down, following the sounds of the others as they crawled over the uneven shelves of ice.

As we exited out into the final chamber, the first thing I noticed was the floor, instead of being cold water covered ice, was warm crack-riddled stone. I walls of ice were also far rougher, covered with ledges, crevices, and spikes. I took advantage of this, quietly splitting away from the others, climbing up over the chamber walls, settling myself into a deep crevice, waiting for my moment.

I watched as B.B. and Blade made their way further into the round room. Suddenly, the floor began to glow. The deeper cracks in the stone floor glowed hot as magma beneath the ocean floor shifted closer to the surface before shifting lower again, allowing the lights to dim. That explained why the floor was so warm. All of a sudden, droplets of water filled the air like rain, but instead of falling straight down, they twisted and spun like the ocean currents outside. They grew thicker and thicker, until the glow of the magma nearly completely failed to give any light to the dim space. Then, out of the twisting rainstorm, came a roar!

"…My power… is bursting… My infinite… power!"

A second roar shook the ice walls, and I clung to the ice beneath me, fighting to keep my grip and not give myself away. I watched as a massive figure swam through the stormy air, out of the unrelenting shadow. My heart clenched in my chest, as it entered the glow, and I saw B.B. and Blade standing face to face with none other than Kyogre, the legendary creator of the oceans!

B.B. stepped forward, "Who are you, and why do you reside here in this cave at the bottom of the sea?"

"My duels against Groudon left us both exhausted… I took a long and deep sleep. All the time, I waited. Waited for my power to recover. And now! I am on the verge of regaining my power!"

"Groudon…? Then you're…"

"I am Kyogre! The lord of the sea! Witness the destructive force of my waves! Marvel at my awesome power!"

Kyogre dove swiftly down, aiming a body slam straight at B.B.! B.B. jumped quickly out of the way, leaping on top of Kyogre and slashing away at it with his leaf blades. I watched nervously as Blade fell back and charged around behind Kyogre, firing shock wave after shock wave, before dodging as it spun around and fired a water pulse at him.

I watched in horror as Kyogre flipped and flung B.B. off his back. B.B. fired a bullet seed after Kyogre as he fell, before landing with a

crash onto an ice ledge not far from me. Fighting my voice down, I crawled quickly and quietly towards where B.B. had landed, and set to work treating his injuries. Once I had finished, B.B. grasped my paw as a form of thanks. I nodded at him silently, and watched as he jumped across the wall, coming to rest on a spur of ice to wait for another chance to leap onto Kyogre.

As I turned back towards the fight to check up on Blade, I was shocked to see Kyogre heading straight for me! I was still standing where B.B. had landed, and Kyogre was looking to finish what it had started! Thinking fast, I sunk low to the ground and braced myself, waiting until Kyogre was practically on top of me. Then, I lit my flame and sprung forward, firing a flamethrower straight at Kyogre's eye. It reared back with a scream of shock and pain, and was struck out of nowhere by a barrage of bullet seed and shock wave attacks. I glanced from side to side to see that B.B. and Blade had rushed to my side when they had seen Kyogre cornering me on the ledge. With a quick glance at each other saying everything that needed to be said, we all charged Kyogre at the same time, landing a slash, leaf blade, and flame wheel attack across its soft underbelly and sending it crashing to the stone floor.

As we approached Kyogre where it lay on the far side of the chamber, Blade began to address the fallen legendary, "Kyogre, have you calmed down? While you were asleep, a falling star nearly destroyed our world. My teammates and I, along with the help of Rayquaza, were able to stop it; however, the aftermath of that near catastrophe has caused natural disasters to plague the land, and I'm sure the sea, as well. The turbulence of the seas has been reflected in you, their lord and master. The same thing happened to your old enemy, Groudon, who has already been subdued. Kyogre, the war between you two is over. There is no reason for you to continue to rampage like a lesser being than you are."

Kyogre looked taken aback by the new knowledge.

B.B. jumped in to the conversation, "All that my friend says is true, Kyogre. We have come into contact with, and faced in battle, Groudon, Rayquaza, and now you yourself. We have saved this world, and we still work to heal its wounds with all of our strength."

"…Then what has brought you here to the Stormy Sea?"

Seeing the skeptical look on Kyogre's face, I chimed in, "The entrance to Stormy Sea was hidden away many years ago, but the aftermath of the falling star caused it to once again be revealed. We came here to explore this place, so that we could bring new information back with us to share with other rescuers and to find treasure that we could use to fund our rescue missions in the future."

Kyogre slowly looked us over, a calculating gleam in its eyes, "… You certainly do sound to be great heroes. It was once the duty of legendaries to protect this world, but you defeated said legendaries and taken the responsibility upon yourselves by your own free will. It is most admirable. You three have earned my respect."

B.B. gave a slight bow, "Thank you, Kyogre."

"…However, I do still feel that it is a legendaries duty to look out for the good of this world. Therefore, I would like to offer you my assistance, should you ever require it."

My eyes felt like they would bug out of my head, "Kyogre… *You* want to be a member of our Team Sureshot?"

"Indeed, young quilava. Anyone who has done as much for the well being of this world as you have clearly deserves to count the legendaries among their allies.

B.B. spoke with a voice filled my pride, "We thank you again, Kyogre. It is an honor to count you as one of us."

Blade and I both nodded in agreement with B.B., it truly was an unbelievable new step for Team Sureshot to be able to name a legendary as one of our members!

B.B. pulled out our map and held it up to Kyogre, pointing to a spot on the coast, "We have spent days fighting our way through the Stormy Sea, and after this fight with you, we could all really use some rest. Do you think you could carry us out through the currents to this beach?"

Kyogre gave the map a quick once over, "Certainly, I can. I know right where that beach is. I take it you three have some method for not drowning?"

"Indeed we do."

"Very good then, climb aboard," Kyogre picked itself up and lowered its tail, allowing us to all scramble onto its back.

Once we were settled, B.B. took the bag from me, and exchanged the map for the Dive disc. He placed it on Kyogre's back and the Jigglypuff bubble formed again, only this time, it was only half a bubble, with the floor being made up of Kyogre.

B.B. lifted his head and called out, "Okay Kyogre, we're all set back here."

With that, Kyogre swam through its personal rainstorm and out through a large opening in the wall at the back of the room. The vicious currents parted around us like they weren't even there, as Kyogre swam swiftly through the water, slowly moving closer towards the surface as it went. When we finally broke the surface of the water, we were beside a ledge that stuck out over the deeper water at the edge of the beach we had left from a couple days prior. The last time we had been here, the morning sun was bright and an ocean breeze was blowing. Now, an almost full moon and a sky full of stars covered the waves and the sand in a soft silver glow. It was beautiful, and not a single cloud hung in the sky to disturb the soft light.

After we had stepped off of Kyogre's back and back onto solid ground, B.B. turned back towards Kyogre, "Thank you for the ride, Kyogre. Where can we find you, if we need your assistance? The bottom of Stormy Sea seems a little far to go…"

"No worries, I have another home not far from here. I assume you are familiar with the Southern Sea, just outside of the bay?"

B.B. nodded, "Yes, I know the area fairly well."

"From this point onward, I will be living in the Seafloor Cave at the

deepest part of the Southern Sea. Should you need me, you will be able to find me there."

"Thank you, Kyogre. Until then."

"Yes, until then."

With that, Kyogre dove beneath the water and swam back out of the bay, into the open sea. Once it was gone, we turned and started walking in the direction of the path that would lead us back to town. I fell into stride comfortably between B.B. and Blade, all of us walking at the same slow even pace. We were all tired, and I couldn't bring myself to break the amiable silence that reigned supreme over the warm peaceful night.

As the three of us walked up in front of the team base to be greeted by the welcoming scent of roses, B.B. turned to me with a sheepish smile on his face, "Hey Bullet, would you mind terribly sleeping here at the base tonight? After that job, I could really use a good long sleep without being woken by Pelipper or anyone else with a job request in the morning."

Understanding, I nodded and smiled, "Sure, no problem at all. Go home and have a good sleep, you deserve it. I can hold down the fort for a night or two."

B.B. smiled and patted me on the shoulder, "Thanks, Bullet. You're the best."

"I know," I replied with a wink.

"Don't push it," he laughed before turning to walk off with Blade down the path towards their homes.

I stood in front of the base and watched them go until they turned a corner and were out of my sight. I heaved a heavy sigh and headed inside carrying our few remaining supplies and our haul of treasure with me. Once inside, I set everything aside on the table to be sorted through later, and headed straight for bed. I could of really used a good freshening up, but I was simply too tired to care. I fell into the soft bed that B.B. normally slept in, and trembled as I drew a deep

breath in. It was a few days stale, but the nest was still saturated with B.B.'s scent. The woody aroma filled my lungs and melted me, as heat spread outwards from my chest all the way to the tips of my toes. *B.B.…* Now that the mission was over, there was nothing to distract my mind from playing image after image of my beautiful best friend behind my eyelids. Surrounded by his smell and with my mind filled with thoughts of him as I drifted towards unconsciousness, I only had one last coherent thought before I drifted under. *What was I going to do…?*

Chapter 7

B.B. POV

I felt bad for misleading Bullet and my pride stung from making myself out to be weak in order to get away from the base, but it was necessary. After all that had happened over the past few days, I had yet to get a moment alone with Blade to talk to him. Between needing to apologize for blowing him off, thank him for saving my life, assure him of how much I valued him as a friend and teammate, and explain the situation with Bullet, which he had proven himself to be more than deserving to know about, a few whispered words in passing simply wasn't going to cut it. We needed to have a real talk.

As Blade and I turned the corner on the path that wrapped itself around the plateau that the town was built on and headed out towards the plains to the north, leaving the presence of Bullet and the base behind us, the comfortable silence that had reigned over our party quickly grew stale and became tense and awkward. What was I supposed to say? I knew Blade and I needed to talk, but hell, where was I even supposed to begin?

My eyes kept darting back and forth from Blade, to my feet, to the path ahead of me, and back. I was quickly growing exasperated with myself, but my leaden tongue seemed utterly determined to take the rest of the night off. I was getting nowhere like this.

"So… are you ready to talk, now?"

I stumbled at the unexpected question and turned my head to stare openly at Blade, only to see him looking straight ahead with his normal disinterested expression on his face.

As we strayed from the path and set out walking across the plains, following the guiding sparkle of the river as we made our way northeast towards our homes, I heaved a sigh and began, "Thank you… for saving my life… and for keeping an eye out for Bullet, when I couldn't."

Blade just nodded his head, "Of course, you're my friends."

"I know. I heard what you said before, when you were talking to Bullet and I was… out to lunch."

Blade gave a small amused huff, which was the closest thing to a laugh I had ever seen from him, "I figured. Even though you were… out to lunch, how you wanted to respond was there on your face; barely, but it was there."

Feeling relieved that Blade clearly didn't doubt our friendship, I pressed forward down the list, "Also, I'm sorry for the way I acted… when we talk before. You didn't deserve that. I guess I just… wasn't expecting that conversation to come up, and when it did… I just wasn't ready to deal with it."

"Apology accepted, and don't worry, I was never upset over that. I could tell that I had struck a raw nerve, but I felt it would be better for you know that there was someone willing to listen, when you were ready to ask for help."

"Thanks, Blade."

With that, a moment of calm quiet settled over us. The soft glow of the moonlight danced gently over the swaying grasses of the plains coupled with the laughing babble of the crystal clear water flowing back south towards the town. The grass parted around us with a whisper, as we made our way from the plains into the forest, the first trees casting their towering shadows over our path. As the last of the moonlight was separated from us and we passed into the deep shade where the river bubbled up from underground, I steeled myself and turned to face Blade with a resolute gleam in my eye.

"Blade, you were right. There is something going on between me and Bullet, and if I'm going to trust anyone to talk about it with, I'm going to trust you. You see, the truth is…"

Blade cut me off, "Don't force yourself, B.B.. It's clear this has been bothering you greatly, and I'm glad you're ready to talk… However, you are exhausted, and so am I. Since we have tomorrow off, let's wait until then for a conversation that is sure to be intense and

emotional draining. Get a good night's sleep, and then come meet me at my home in Darkness Ridge. We will be able to speak freely there for as long as is necessary."

I didn't know what to say in response, but unable to argue against any angle of his logic, I heaved a sigh that was a strange mix of relief and frustration and nodded my agreement. With the plans for the following day set, we parted ways at the gurgling spring, Blade heading north into the mountains and I heading east into the deepest part of the Eastern Forest. As the forest became steadily denser as I went, I eventually abandoned the ground in favor of leaping from branch to branch and moving through the trees that way. The instinctual ease of the action helped to set my frazzled nerves at ease, and the familiar lullaby of the many leaves dancing together as I passed them drew me towards home and my waiting bed.

Once I had finally reached the heart of the Overgrown Forest, where I had chosen to make my home, I only took a moment to cast an affectionate smile towards the mother tree, whose roots and branches surrounded the clearing, before proceeding into my tree house. The strain of the past few days had become glaringly obvious as I made my way home, and it was all that I could do to pull the screens away from the skylight above the hammock where I slept.

I fell with a flop into the strong, rocking embrace of the mother tree's vines and stared up through the skylight at the myriad of stars that seemed to have all convened to the one small scrap of night sky that was visible through the tightly woven branches above. In that moment, I was too tired to worry over what might happen during my visit with Blade in the morning. Surrounded by branches and stars, I felt a numbing sense of peace settle over me as I drifted off to sleep. As my vision faded into the dream that had already begun, the last thing I saw was the stars start to shine red and rearrange themselves, until I was staring into a warm smiling face with sparkling red eyes. *Bullet* . With a goofy grin on my face, I finally succumbed to my fatigue and fell into much needed slumber.

When morning came and I was awoken by the first sharp beams of sunlight pouring their way through the window overhead, I pulled

myself from my bed and stretched the mild stiffness from my muscles. I had slept well, and the soreness from days of fighting our way through the Stormy Sea had all but vanished. After having my breakfast, nestled up in the mother tree's highest branches, while watching the morning sun paint its way over the rest of the forest, I took a roundabout path towards the mountains, enjoying the feeling of my muscles working gently beneath my skin as I flew from tree to tree. Once the trees had thinned out and the ground had begun to slope upwards, I kept up my pace by leaping to the earth and jogging along the familiar mountain path that would lead me to the cave I was looking for. The path lead me deep into the mountain range, before branching west down into a barren rift between the towering peaks and straight into the dimness of the cave at the end of the trail.

The gaping mouth that split the side of the mountain stretched deeper and deeper into the underground shadows, until the cave was exposed for what it truly was, the entrance of a tunnel. Darkness Ridge, where Blade had built his home, was located on a massive shelf of rock within an enormous cavern in the heart of the mountain range, connected to the outside world by a series of dozens of naturally occurring tunnels scattered all over the range. A steep drop-off below the ridge was hidden completely in darkness, only being broken by an array of mysterious lights, like ghostly fireflies, rising up out of the dark and light the ridge above with their eerie glow. That light was increased by the glow being reflected off of a series of tiny creeks and waterfalls moving down from smaller rock shelves above the ridge. The reflections of the floating lights coated the water so thoroughly, that it seemed more like the streams were shining from their own inner light. The rock shelves were also decorated with half petrified trees, some nothing but bones and others frozen in time with leaves like stained glass still in place on their branches. How the ancient trees had ever gotten into the cave and managed to grow there was anyone's guess.

As I made my way out of the tunnel and into the greater cavern, I was once again struck by the well-known sense of awe that I couldn't help but feel whenever I visited this place. The place was beautiful and macabre at the same time, and the balanced never ceased to puzzle me. Not wasting another moment on pointless

daydreaming, I headed out along the ridge, calling out for Blade.

"Yo, Blade! You around? Hey, Blade!" The guy had always been such a recluse; I actually had no idea exactly where on the ridge Blade lived.

"Good morning, B.B.. It seems you slept well."

I looked up to see Blade looking down at me from atop a ledge protruding from the shelf directly above, and couldn't help myself as a grin stretched across my face, "How can you even tell it's morning, living in here? For all you know, I could have slept the day away and waited 'til midnight to come over."

"No, you wouldn't have the patience for that. Regardless, I still know what time of day it is, even living in a cave."

"How?" I looked at him skeptically.

Blade leapt down from his perch and landed beside me, "I just do. Shall we go, then?"

Letting the teasing conversation drop, I followed Blade along the ridge, "So where are we going?"

"The best place for a private conversation, my tree."

Within a few minutes, I had followed Blade to the base of the largest skeleton tree on the ridge. He glanced at me for a moment, making sure I was still following him, and leapt through a hole in the trunk of the hollow tree and disappeared. I quickly followed him inside, only to be pleasantly surprised by what I saw. While the tree had been hard as stone on the outside, the inner walls were still strong, supple wood, which Blade had carved a series of indentations into, making a bed and several storage shelves. The tall circular chamber was lit by a pair of lanterns that each held one of the floating lights inside of it. Something about that felt really creepy to me.

I gestured to the lanterns, "Are you sure it's okay to catch those things like that?"

Blade nodded, "It's fine. I never keep them locked up for longer than

a day, and then I release them and catch two new ones."

"So… they are alive, then?"

"Not sure, but they help alleviate the silence a bit. If you are really quiet, you can hear them sing."

"Really?" He had to be pulling my leg.

"Try it."

I stopped talking for a moment and listened closely for any sound. The thick walls of the tree muffled all the noises from outside, and it was momentarily dead silent inside. Then, I heard two faint whispering voices singing a tune that almost made me want to dance… or get drunk… or both.

"Wow, okay then. That's a little odd."

"Maybe, but it's normal for in here."

"You live in a strange place, my friend. Speaking of which, where were you before?"

Blade settled himself down onto his bed, answering my question absently, "I was washing all of the dried sea water out of my fur in one of the nearby streams. Putting that aside, let's get to the reason you came here, since I know it wasn't simply to make jokes about choices in real estate."

My humor cooled instantly and I sat down into an empty groove across from blade with a sigh, "Always straight to the point, aren't you Blade?"

"Someone has to be."

"Touché," I took a deep breath, trying to keep my heartbeat under control, "So… about me and Bullet…"

"Let me guess, you're in love with him, right?"

My jaw dropped open with a pop and my eyes felt like they would

drop out and roll across the floor, and after nearly a minute of gasping like a magikarp, I managed to splutter out, "What? But how? How did you..?"

"How did I know? Well, I had suspected as much for awhile, but I wasn't positive about it until a few nights ago in the Stormy Sea, right after you almost drowned. You weren't the only one who woke up in the middle of the night that night. I saw the way you held Bullet; the way you looked at him. I may be fairly new this whole "friendship" thing, but I do know that *that* wasn't a way someone would act towards a friend."

I blushed red and stared at my feet, not knowing what to say. Blade had seen right through me from the get go, and then he caught me with my hand in the cookie jar on top of everything else!

"…B.B.," Blade's change in tone pulled my eyes back up to his, as he stared me down from across the small room, "B.B., you are my friend, and that is all that matters to me. I can see what you're thinking written all over your face. You're afraid I'll hate you, right? That I'll lose trust in you? That I'll be disgusted with you? Well you can just forget about all of that, because none of it is going to happen."

I blinked at Blade, completely dumbfounded. What had he just said?

"You're gay. I don't care. You're still my friend. You're in love with Bullet. You two are my closest friends. What I want is whatever will make you two happy. That's what it means to be best friends, right?"

I fought down the lump in my throat and tried to discreetly wipe the *not* tears from my eyes, "Thank you, Blade. I can't tell you what it means to me to hear you say that, and to know that you've still got my back, no matter what."

Blade nodded his head and gave a small smile, and the warmest expression I had ever seen grace the absol's face.

I choked out a bittersweet laugh, "Thanks for the support, but as far as the whole Bullet and I being together thing goes, that's never gonna happen?"

Blade seemed confused, "Why not?"

I scoffed, "Well first of all, Bullet isn't gay. He doesn't even know that I'm gay, and he has absolutely *no* idea that I am truly, madly, head over heels in love with him!"

Blade was silent, with a clearly contemplative look on his face.

"What is it, Blade?"

"I'm trying to decide if I should tell you something, or if it would be better to let it play itself out. However, knowing you two, if I don't say something now, it may never come out into the open."

"Tell me what?!"

"That I think you may be wrong about Bullet."

…What? What was Blade talking about? Wrong about Bullet? About what?

"B.B., that same night that I saw you holding on to Bullet, I saw Bullet laying awake and watching you. The way he looked at you was the exact same way as how you looked at him, and he was crying. He had cried earlier that day, but those tears were different. The tears he cried over you while you were sleeping weren't tears of relief that you were alive, or anger that he hadn't been able to protect you. Those tears looked like the tears of a desperate heart that had finally found everything that it had ever wanted, only to realize that it was just outside of its grasp. A heartbroken Bullet cried for *you* while you slept that night, B.B.."

"But Blade… no, that's… Blade, that's just not possible. You must be wrong." I couldn't believe what he was saying. It just couldn't be true. I couldn't allow myself to hope for that. It would kill me if I allowed myself to hope and it all came to naught.

"B.B., as a friend, as a best friend, as a teammate, as someone who saved your life, I'm asking, no, begging you to believe me. Bullet feels the same way about you as you do about him, but there is no way Bullet would ever work up the nerve to say anything. When it comes to things like this, Bullet is completely clueless. I'm willing to

bet that he has been in love with you since the day you two met, but only recently figured it out himself. B.B., if you two are ever going move past this and be happy, then *you* have to be the one to tell *him* how you feel."

"It's not that simple, Blade! What if you're wrong? What if I tell him and he doesn't feel the same way? What if he hates me? What if it completely destroys our friendship? I can't take that chance, Blade! I can't lose him!"

Blade lifted himself from his bed and moved to stand beside me, "Do you really believe that? Do you really have so little faith in your partner that you really believe that he would disown you if he ever found out how you felt? What about the time when everyone in town was convinced that you were the terrible human from the Ninetails Legend, who provoked the wrath of Ninetails and left Gardevoir to die in order to save your own skin? Did Bullet abandon you then? No, he ran away with you, sacrificing everything he had and putting his life on the line in order to clear your name and protect you from the bounty hunters. Even if you *had* turned out to be the one from the legend, do you think Bullet would have turned you in? No, I'd bet my life that Bullet *still* would have done anything in order to protect you, regardless of what you were guilty of, because that's just how Bullet has always been when it comes to you."

"…You're right, Blade. You're right." It was all true. Everything Blade had said was completely true! Bullet had always been my rock, and he would never abandon me, no matter what. I had never had that level of belief in anyone, and I knew that Bullet deserved every bit of it. …And if what Blade had said was true, I couldn't allow myself to hope, then my cowardice was causing pain to the one I loved most. That was unacceptable!

I was gonna do it. It was time. I would find Bullet, and with my heart in my hand, I would tell him everything. The time for lies was over, and lives or die trying, I was going to fight for the one I loved. After trading brief goodbyes with Blade, I took off running at a dead sprint, away from Darkness Ridge, out of the mountains, and south towards the base and where Bullet was.

I spoke my thoughts out loud as I charged through the murky tunnel,

" *Bullet. Bullet. Please,* don't let this be the biggest mistake of my life."

Chapter 8

Bullet POV

I rose with the first rays of sun slipping over the horizon. My sleep had been plagued by an endless barrage of dreams about B.B.; grovyle B.B., human B.B., teasing B.B., serious B.B., B.B. when he was playing with Caterpie and Metapod at Wiscash's Pond, B.B. when he was helping Auntie Kangaskhan do inventory after a storm had trashed her store rooms, B.B. when he had helped me tie my scarf before we set out for Stormy Sea, B.B. when he had whispered in my ear in the ice cave, B.B. when we had slept close enough together that I could feel his heart beat against mine, and B.B. that morning when I had walked in on him dreaming about his lover and…

"Ugh!"

I dropped my head onto the surface of the table with a loud thud. Needless to say, that train of thought had finally convinced me to give up on actually getting a good night's sleep. Convinced that rest was a lost cause, as soon as there was enough natural light to see by trickling through the window, I climbed from the B.B. scented nest, bathed myself, and set to work going through and sorting out everything that we had brought back from Stormy Sea.

These endeavors turned out to be decent but short-lived distractions for my wandering mind. I attempted to further my distraction by fixing myself an excessively elaborate breakfast, and then focusing a little too hard on the flavors of the food. Just as I had finished eating, I heard the tell-tale flap of Pelipper's wings outside. I cleaned up from breakfast, went out to collect the mail, sorted through the new requests, and filed them with the others that we already had for B.B. to review later.

Once that had been done, I decided that it was late enough to head into town. I went by Auntie Kangaskhan's place to store away our treasure cache until B.B. made the decision on what we should do

with it, and then I restocked our treasure bag with a standard set of basic supplies for the next time we went out. I stopped by the Kecleon Market and bought a few basic things that were on sale, I had a brief training session at Makuhita Dojo, and I went to see Persian at the bank to deposit the rest of our extra money into our account. Once all of those chores had been done, I returned to the base and sat awhile in the garden, with only the roses for company.

I guess I could have visited with my friends in town or the other members of Team Sureshot who hadn't gone to Stormy Sea, if I wanted to keep my mind off of the dreams I had been having, but somehow, I just didn't feel up to making small talk with anyone, particularly anyone who knew me well enough to recognize that there was something wrong and start asking me about it. What was I gonna do about this? It wasn't like I could keep turning into a total fool every time I thought about him! And I certainly couldn't just start avoiding him for no apparent reason! So… what options did I have left?

I pulled myself to my feet and set out away from the base. It wasn't as if we were taking any jobs today anyway, so there was no reason for me to just hang around at the base all day. I started walking the path out of town, lost in thought, no really paying attention to where I was going, and not really having anywhere in particular to go. I just allowed my mind to wander, not even attempting to keep a handle on my thoughts anymore.

Eventually, I felt the path beneath my feet change and I stopped. I looked around and realized that I had been subconsciously drifting east, and I had just passed onto the bridge that lead across the Rub-A-Dub River. Realizing how close I was to the edge of the Eastern Forest, I was suddenly hit with an overwhelming desire to see B.B.. I took off running at a dead sprint across the bridge and towards the trees.

I didn't know what I was going to say to him. I had no excuse for as to why I was rushing out to the Overgrown Forest to see him on his day off, but none of that mattered to me as I sped through the forest. I *had* to see B.B.. I *needed* to be around him. I didn't care how much it hurt me to be beside him and have to lie to him about how I felt! I just felt like, somehow, I would lose my mind if I had to wait until

tomorrow to see his face, hear his voice, and feel the confident strength of him standing beside me.

Out of breath and trembling on my tired paws, I burst through the trees into the clearing at the center of Overgrown Forest and fought to catch my breath. I looked up at B.B.'s tree house, and as soon as I regained my voice, I called sheepishly up to the canopy above.

"Hey B.B., are you home? It's me, Bullet."

There was no response. Not even a sound of shuffling inside to indicate that I had just woken B.B. up greeted my call. The only noise at all in the clearing was the continued whisper of the branches stirred by the late morning breeze.

B.B. hadn't bothered to roll up the rope ladder that hung down from his front door, so I decided to climb up and have a peek inside. Once I had entered the small, one room tree house, it was easy to see that B.B. wasn't home. The room was filled with the soft sunlight that was filtering through the skylight in the ceiling, and B.B. was nowhere to be found. The only things in the room were a small, ornately carved, wood table; a few clay pots, most likely filled with water; a basket of apples; two leafy screens leaning against the wall, probably for covering the skylight when the weather was bad; and a hammock that was clearly woven from the living vines that were growing outside, flowing in and out of the small tree house through two small gaps in the walls on each side.

I was suddenly struck by my exhaustion after two restless nights in a row, and stumbled over towards the hammock, testing the strength of the vines with a firm press. Sure that they would hold, I climbed into the gently rocking hammock, and took a moment to rest my suddenly *extremely* heavy eyelids. That smell… *Oh Arceus!* This wasn't a nest that B.B. had slept in a few nights ago; it couldn't have been more than a few *hours* since B.B. had slept here, and the vines were absolutely saturated with B.B.'s scent! A shudder rippled down my spine and out through my fur as I was suddenly reminded of the feeling of B.B. holding me in his arms while he slept. Surrounded by his scent and his memory, it almost felt as if I was being rocked to sleep in his arms, as I drifted into a light doze.

" *B.B.…."*

B.B. POV

I came tearing around the corner on the path into town, and came to a panting, sweating stop out in front of the team base. I had sprinted all the way here, fueled by my conviction to finally confess my feelings to Bullet, but now that I was here… What in Arceus's name was I supposed to say?! I couldn't just charge in there shouting, "Bullet, I'm gay, and I'm in love with you!" All I could do was stand there, tongue-tied, and thinking that the bright green building with its rose gardens and flag flapping in the breeze had never looked so menacing as it did in this moment. In fact, I couldn't remember any time when I had been this afraid to enter a building since I had been a human attending public school, but this was an entirely different type of fear.

Finally, having given up on my brain having a miraculous recovery and giving me a good plan of action, I walked up the path to the door, hoping that if I spent the afternoon with Bullet, eventually, an opportunity would present itself to tell him. I walked through the base looking for Bullet, since calling didn't seem likely to happen around the lump in my throat. I found that the base had been meticulously cleaned from top to bottom, a written record of everything that we had brought back from Stormy Sea, a reorganized list of all the job requests we had received, a resupplied treasure bag laid out with our badges and wonder map, and a fully stocked larder, but no Bullet, even though his handiwork was everywhere I looked. Did he sleep at all last night? He had gotten so much stuff done around here, and it wasn't even noon, yet!

Since Bullet clearly wasn't here, and he seemed to be determined to not take a day off, I decided to go into town to look for him, thinking he might be there running more errands. Once I had made my way into town, I decided to go to the Kecleon Market. Given their position in the square, the Kecleon brothers were the ones who were most likely to have seen where Bullet went. Plus, with all of the food restocked at the base, it was clear that Bullet had already been to see them at some point this morning.

"Hello! Welcome to the Kecleon Shop! How can I assist you on this

fine morning, B.B.?"

"Morning, Kecleon. Sorry, I'm not here to shop today."

"Oh… Well, I expected as much. It did seem rather odd that you would come to shop when Bullet was already here early this morning to buy all your usual merchandise."

"Yeah, about that… I'm kinda looking for Bullet. You wouldn't happen to know where he might be, would you?"

"Hmm… Well, he finished his errands and went back towards your Team Sureshot's base quite some time ago. If he isn't there, then I'm not sure where he could be. He's certainly not anywhere in town, though. Maybe he returned home after he finished his work for the team?"

"Hm, that's not a bad idea. I'll go look for him in the Scorched Plains. Thanks, Kecleon."

"Of course! Come back anytime!"

"Will do. See ya."

With that, I turned away from town and headed west, out along the coast and across the narrow land bridge that connected the volcanic lands to the mainland. I made my way across the blistering Scorched Plains that stretched across the land at the northern base of the volcano, heading for the jagged cliff where I knew Bullet's home was tucked away inside the stone. After a brisk jog across the burning plains, I peeked my head around the narrow crack in the rock, searching for my missing angel.

"Yo Bullet, you home?"

When I was met with no response, I went in and had a look around. A few of the ashes from Bullet's nest had drifted across the floor from some stray wind that had managed to squeeze around the rock; Bullet clearly hadn't slept here for a few days. The shelf of rock where Bullet's supplies were all laid out was covered in a thin layer of undisturbed dust; he hadn't been eating here either. Satisfied that there was no way that Bullet had been home today, I left the small

cave behind to search the rest of the plains.

As if Arceus wanted to save me the trouble of searching and just get right to dashing my hopes, as soon as I had taken a few steps away from Bullet's cave, I saw Beau the rapidash, one of my fellow members of Team Sureshot, charging up to me from across the barren landscape.

"What's up, B.B.! I heard that you, Bullet, and Blade just made it back from Stormy Sea late last night. How was it? Did you get a good haul of treasure?"

Ugh… once the topic turned to treasure, Beau would be talking my ear off for hours! Time for a change of subject, "Yeah, we sure did, Beau, but we can go over the specifics at the next group meeting. I'm actually in a bit of a hurry. I'm looking for Bullet. You haven't seen him around the plains today, have you?"

"No. Sorry, man. I haven't seen him since the day before you guys set out for Stormy Sea, and I have been all over this side of the volcano already today, as per usual. If he was hanging around here, I definitely would have seen him, ya know?"

"Yeah… Thanks anyway, Beau. You saved me the trouble of looking myself."

"No prob, boss man! So about that group meeting, when's that gonna be, exactly? I'm super stoked to hear all about the craziness that went down!"

"No worries, Beau. It'll be in the next couple of days. I'll keep you posted."

"Awesome! I'll see ya later, bro!"

And just like that, the rapidash, who I often thought was using his impressive mane to compensate for lack of a brain, was off and running again. As the flash of his white fur quickly disappeared from my sight, my heart sank with the knowledge that I was completely out of ideas of where to look for Bullet. After so long of searching for him, the resolve that I had had to confess to him when I left

Darkness Ridge was starting to wane, and all of my doubts were returning to fill its place. With a heavy sigh, and my heart sitting like a piece of lead inside my chest, I decided that I might as well make my way back home to Overgrown Forest.

It was a long walk home, east up the coast, around the outskirts of town, across the grassy plains, around the spring of the river, and through the familiar forest. By the time that I made it back to the clearing, I had missed lunch, but I didn't really care, my appetite just wasn't there. Deciding that the best way to drown my frustrations was with an afternoon nap, I made the last few leaps that brought me into my tree house's doorway.

As I stepped through the door, my heart stopped dead, my mouth fell open, and my tongue tied itself in a knot. Lying there *in my bed* , bathed in golden beams of early afternoon sunlight, looking just like the angel he was, was Bullet. I couldn't pull my eyes away from him. From the way the golden sun wove through his beautiful, silken, green fur to the cute little blush that colored his sleeping face, I was absolutely captivated.

"Mmm… B.B.."

I jumped, thinking I had been caught staring, but then I saw Bullet squirm in his sleep and return to his dreaming with a gentle sigh. Bullet… just called my name… in his sleep…

"B.B…. *please!* "

Oh my Arceus… What in the world was Bullet dreaming about?! Calling my name like that… it couldn't be…

Then suddenly, Bullet's eyelids flickered open, and he stared across the room at me with hazy red eyes.

"Mmm… B.B., why are you way over there? Come back," Bullet reached out his arms towards me, beckoning me to join him in the hammock.

Something in my brain just stopped. My heart had gone into overtime and my self control snapped like a twig. A little voice in the

back of my head was saying something about Bullet still being asleep, even though his eyes were open. I didn't care, I just didn't care. Awake or asleep, Bullet was calling for *me* ! *Me* ! He wanted *me* to come to his side and hold him, and there was no way in hell that I was going to refuse him! How could I, when he looked at me like that, like he wanted me so badly he was about to cry. Was this the look Blade had been talking about? If it was, then it was a good thing I had slept through it, because if I had seen this face then, even with all three of us trapped together in that ice cave, I doubt I would have been able to control myself.

"B.B., please. Come back to me, B.B.. *Please!* "

I couldn't hold it anymore. My legs carried me clumsily across the room, as if of their own free will. My arms moved of their own accord, too, wrapping around Bullet, pulling him halfway out of the hammock and into my arms as his previously outstretched arms wound themselves around my neck. I looked down in awe at the beautiful, perfect face that was only inches from mine, flushed pink beneath his fur, decorated with brilliant flashes of gold, and adorned with those glorious eyes that were able to be both melted and melting at the same time.

" *B.B.…* "

As I felt Bullet's warm breath wash across my face as he called my name, the last flecks of will power I had been hanging onto died. My claws wove into the soft fur that covered his cheek, and I leaned in and kissed those soft lips that I had dreamed of so many times. My dreams had never done him justice. This *real* feeling of Bullet's lips pressed against mine was beyond anything I could have ever imagined. Then, *oh sweet Arceus* , those lips began to *move* ! Bullet was kissing me! Those unbearably hot, unbelievably soft lips were moving against mine, brushing, teasing, pulling lightly. Then, those lips parted and his teeth were nipping at my bottom lip.

I pulled Bullet the rest of the way out of the hammock and into my lap, forcing my tongue through his parted lips and *tasting* him. Oh he tasted *so* good! His mouth was even hotter than his lips, and he was sweet, like apples and cinnamon. His tongue jumped out and stroked clumsily along mine, as if encouraging it to play. As if I

needed any extra encouragement. I kissed him long and deep, our tongues twisting together, first inside his mouth, then outside as we both gasped for air, refusing to let the kiss end. As we kissed, my claws slid through Bullet's fur, tracing over his angelic face, down his neck, and across his thin shoulders. Bullet was more or less doing the same thing, running his paws over my face, as if determined to memorize every single curve. This moment was perfect, and I never wanted it to end. However, all good things must eventually come to an end.

The kiss finally ended, our lips remaining connected momentarily by a long strand of saliva. Bullet's eyes remained closed for a moment, but when they opened he looked at me with a sad smile before nuzzling his face into the side of my neck.

"Why can't this be real? Why does it always have to be a dream?"

Stealing myself for his reaction, I wrapped bullet in a tight hug, "This is no dream, Bullet."

Bullet pulled back with a puzzled expression on his face.

"This *is* real."

Those eyes that had still been, up until now, fuzzy with sleep, suddenly cleared and filled with a mix of shock and horror.

Figuring that now was as good a time as any, I took a deep breath and…

"Bullet… I love you."

Chapter 9

Bullet POV

The sand was soft and warm beneath my body and my breathing was in perfect rhythm with the lapping ocean waves. My eyelids fluttered open, only to be temporarily blinded by the bright sunlight pouring down from the cloudless blue sky. As my vision cleared, my attention was immediately captured by a figure standing down by the water's edge.

A smile spread across my face and a blissful sigh slipped between my parted lips as I looked upon the familiar form, "B.B.…."

B.B. turned and looked back over his shoulder at me with a gentle, warm smile. My heart beat harder in my chest as my eyes made their way over the grovyle's beautiful body. The sunlight seemed to wrap itself around every scale of that slender, muscular body, making B.B. literally glow as he turned and made his way up the beach towards me. The wind off the sea stirred through B.B.'s leaves, carrying his masculine, woody scent ahead of him and thoroughly bathing me in it. I was positively trembling in the warm sand by the time B.B. had covered the short distance to my side. B.B. went down on one knee beside me and ran his claws tenderly through my fur. Arceus, *nothing felt as good as B.B. when he touched me.*

" *Mmm… B.B.."*

I looked up into the sun's glare to gaze at the shadowed face above me. Those vibrant yellow eyes were locked onto me, burning with a heat that put even my own flames to shame. As I watched, his face dropped down and pressed into the fur on the side of my neck. I could feel my pulse pounding faster with every passing second, and apparently B.B. could, too. I heard a husky chuckle fall from his mouth as he kissed from my chin down my throat to where my heart was attempting to burst its way out of my chest.

B.B. lay down beside me, pulling my body flush against his. He

began to make his way back up my throat, but not just kissing this time; his kisses were punctuated by teasing nibbles and long sensual licks. I quivered and squirmed as B.B. worked my neck over, jumping with a gasp as his claws that had before remained innocently on my shoulders made their way down over my sides before grabbing possessively onto my hips.

" *B.B.…* please! *"*

I didn't know what I was begging for; all I knew was that I needed more. More of B.B., more of him touching me like this. It didn't matter what happened now, as long as B.B. was this close, holding me like this, so strong but gentle at the same time. I felt like I would die if this ended now.

B.B.'s tongue trailed its way up to my ear, and his voice practically moaned in my ear, "Bullet…"

My eyes clenched tight as my mind shut down at the overpowering *lust* in B.B.'s voice. When my eyes opened again, we were no longer at the beach. We were in B.B.'s tree house, and I was lying in B.B.'s bed beneath an open skylight. Apparently, this dream had decided on an instantaneous change of scenery, but where did B.B. go? He was no longer beside me in the hammock. I looked up across the room and saw B.B. standing in the doorway, looking at me with a look that held the same affection and heat as before, only partially hidden by a new veil of flustered nervousness. While I couldn't help thinking that the embarrassed flush on B.B.'s face was pretty adorable, that thought was secondary to the overwhelming need to have B.B. holding me again.

"Mmm… B.B., why are you way over there? Come back," I reached for him, desperate to shorten the distance between us by any small amount I could.

If I had thought that B.B. was flushed before, that was nothing compared to what he was now. The red glow beneath his green skin was now stretched all the way up over his head and all the way down his neck and across his chest, which was now heaving like he had just sprinted all the way here from the beach where we had just been. I could see the faint sparkle of sweat starting to form over his

skin and the way his claws were trembling, like they were no longer under his control.

I decided that he needed another little nudge to get him back where he needed to be, "B.B., please. Come back to me, B.B.. *Please!* "

And that was all it took. B.B. nearly tripped over his own feet as he threw himself awkwardly across the room to the bedside. Before I could even start to giggle about his sudden lack of coordination, B.B. had grabbed me and pulled me up out of the hammock and into his arms. I wrapped my arms around his neck, relishing in the feeling of once again being this close to B.B., so close that I could feel his heart beating against mine and feel his breath threading its way through my fur. I looked up into that stunningly handsome face, so close to mine, and felt my blood start to boil beneath my skin.

" *B.B.…* "

The last of the nervous awkwardness disappeared from his eyes, and was replaced with an incredibly arousing desperate look that had me entirely stunned. Then, my heart nearly stopped as B.B. leaned down and kissed me. His lips were firm against mine, but they weren't scaly or cold, the satin smooth feeling of them against mine was the most amazing thing I could have ever imagined. This was one hell of a dream! I hungrily started to kiss him back. I couldn't claim to have any real technique, but it didn't bother me so much, since the only thing I could seem to think of was the incredible feeling of those silky lips dragging against mine.

When I did have another thought, it was that same one from the beach. I *had* to have more! I tried nipping gently at B.B.'s lip, hoping it would get him to give me what I wanted, and boy did it! Before I knew what had happened, I was in B.B.'s lap and B.B.'s tongue had slid past my lips and was teasing its way around my mouth. I didn't know what to do, so I just gave into my desires and started to lick and suck his tongue. Oh my *Arceus* ! B.B.'s tongue was long and agile as it twisted around mine, flooding my mind with the *taste* of it. B.B. tasted just like he smelled, like musk and the woods, sharp, slightly bitter, and *by far* the sexiest thing ever!

The kiss went on and on, my tongue and lips desperately chasing

after every move that B.B.'s made. At one point, B.B.'s claws had started combing through my fur again. Overwhelmed by yet another level of sensation, I lost control of my own paws as they made their own way up from around B.B.'s neck to trace over and clutch at that perfect face. This was the greatest dream I had ever had! I never wanted it to end, but as my head grew dizzier with each passing minute without enough air, I had to end the kiss. I gasped for air as I pulled away from the long, wet kiss, and I was once again hit with the knowledge that as amazing as this was, it was all just a fantasy. I kept my eyes closed; I couldn't stand to look at B.B. while my heart broke in two once again, knowing that my feelings would never be returned.

The weight of my grief became too much, and my head fell heavily against B.B.'s shoulder as my anguish found words and tumbled out of my mouth and into B.B.'s neck, "Why can't this be real? Why does it always have to be a dream?"

B.B.'s arms around me grew tighter, like he could just squeeze the heartache right out of me, "This is no dream, Bullet."

What? I pulled back and looked at B.B.'s face. In all of the times that I had dreamed of B.B., never had he tried to convince me that it was anything more than a dream before. B.B.'s expression was completely serious and a little bit afraid as his eyes gazed into mine.

"This *is* real."

I was suddenly hit by a wave of memories of the day's events. I had gotten up early, done all the chores for the team, gone for a walk, gone to see B.B., and then… Oh Arceus! Then, I had fallen asleep in B.B.'s bed, and when he came home and found me there, I threw myself at him! Oh no, what had I done? B.B. was sure to hate me now!

Before I broke down and started crying hysterically, I was distracted by B.B., whose muscles had gone stiff and who was looking like he was trying to work up the nerve to say something. Here it comes…

"Bullet… I love you."

My eyes grew wide, and my breathing had stopped all together. What did he just say? My mind had gone blank, when I finally found my voice again, all I could manage was a breathy whisper.

"…what?"

B.B. looked like he was about to fidget right out of his skin. I had never seen him like this before. He had come face to face with death several times before, but I had never seen him look so tense, frantic, and downright terrified as he did right now in this moment with me sitting in his lap.

"I said..." B.B. cleared his throat and forced himself to look me in the eye, "I love you. I'm in love with you, Bullet. I have been for a long time now, but I was always too afraid to tell you. I was… afraid that you would hate me."

As B.B. lost the battle with his eyes and they fell back to the floor behind me, I felt like my heart was climbing up my throat. B.B…. loves me? But… how is that possible? Wasn't he in love with his girlfriend back in the human world?

"But… I thought…"

B.B. mumbled, still staring at the floor, "What did you think, Bullet?"

"I thought… that you had a girlfriend."

B.B.'s head snapped up and he looked at me again, with surprise clearly spelled out across his face, "Whatever gave you that idea? When did I ever say anything that would have given you the impression that I was seeing somebody?"

As my memory of where I had gotten that idea came flooding back to me, I burned bright red and suddenly it was me who couldn't meet B.B.'s eyes as I muttered out, "The day we left for Stormy Sea… I showed up early, and I saw you while you were… you know…"

B.B. flushed darker, guessing what I meant, but refusing to let me off the hook, "While I was what?"

"While you were… having a wet dream."

B.B. was silent for a long moment, and I was hyper conscious of the fact that I was still sitting in his lap. Finally, B.B. spoke again, in a voice I didn't expect; it wasn't upset, but confused, "So… how did *that* give you the impression that I had a girlfriend?"

"Well… since you had never mentioned being attracted to anyone… and I thought… if you were… you would have at least told me, at least… I thought you would have… so I thought that you must… still be in love with someone from…"

B.B.'s eyes suddenly grew wide with understanding and horror, "You thought that I had someone waiting for me in the human world, someone that I wanted to go back to."

I knew it wasn't a question, but I nodded my head anyway, unable to speak or even make eye contact again.

B.B.'s arms all of a sudden pulled me into an embrace that forced my face into his shoulder and knocked all the air from my lungs, "How could you think I would ever lie to you? I told you that I would never go back to the human world, that my home was here with *you* ! How could you doubt me like that, Bullet? There is *no one* waiting for me on the other side, and I would rather die than ever go back to that place and leave you here!"

I couldn't help myself as hot tears started to well up in my eyes and fall down onto B.B.'s shoulder. B.B. jerked back and stared at my tearstained face with a pained look on his face. He released his hold on me and clenched his eyes shut.

"I'm so sorry, Bullet. I shouldn't have said anything. Please, don't cry. Please, don't hate me."

Stricken by B.B.'s ghastly misunderstanding, my tears only fell harder as I held his face and placed my forehead against his, "No B.B., you're wrong. I could never hate you. You're the most important pokemon to me ever, in my entire life. I'm only crying because I am so relieved! I was so afraid that you were suffering by staying here with me, and I can't stand the thought of you being in pain, because… I… love you, too."

Those golden eyes flashed open and poured into mine with a look of utter shock and disbelief, "Bullet… what did you just… do you understand what you just said?"

I could only smile through the tears still in my eyes, "Yeah, I said that I'm in love with you, B.B.."

"Bullet…"

I leaned in and kissed the mouth that was inches from mine, in a tender, loving kiss. I shuddered, somehow just knowing that this wasn't a dream made it a thousand times better than the first kiss. I could feel B.B. shaking against me, like he was about to cry, as he returned my kiss with one that was filled with more love than I could have imagined possible before meeting B.B.. Then, he was crying. I could feel his tears soaking into my fur as we kissed over and over again, sweet little kisses that were all lips and all love and worship of each other. Being like this with B.B., I felt like my heart would break. It was just too good to be true, but at the same time, it was just too amazing to be another dream!

As we finally pulled apart, B.B. looked at me with an expression full of awe and smiled the purest, most blissfully happy smile I had ever seen on my love's face, "Thank you, Bullet."

"What for?"

"For loving me."

I could only giggle and clutch B.B. closer to me, "How could I not?"

"Only *you* would say that about someone like me, and *that's* why I will never let you go."

I didn't know what to say to that. The only thing that I could comprehend was the felling that every little break in my heart was gone, not healed but gone, like it had never existed in the first place. I was here with B.B., and he loved me just as much as I loved him. That was the only thing that I cared about. I wanted to belong to B.B., and to have him belong to me and nobody else.

"…B.B.?"

B.B. stroked my cheek, wiping away my tears and gazing at me with shining eyes, "Yes, Bullet?"

"This… really isn't a dream, right?"

B.B. laughed, "No Bullet. This is *not* a dream. This is all real. No dream could be this perfect."

"Then… could you… prove it?"

B.B. froze, "Bullet? What do you…?"

I flushed dark red and lurched forward, forcing B.B. onto his back, "I want you to prove this isn't a dream… by doing something I would never be able to come up with on my own."

B.B. turned nearly as red as I was and his breathing was fast and hard, "Bullet… do you know what you're asking for?"

"Well… no, not exactly. I don't know if it's possible to do… *it* … with two males… but I… I really *really* want you… and kissing, it's incredible, but… it's just…"

"Not enough?"

I could only nod. I was so embarrassed! What was I even talking about? We just barely confessed to each other, and I'm already trying to… Oh Arceus, why can't the floor just swallow me up now?

"Okay."

"Huh?" Did he just…?

"I said, okay. I understand how you feel. I feel the same way about you too, you know?"

Really? B.B. wants to… with me? His face was redder than I had ever seen it, but that look in his eyes definitely spelled out just how serious he was.

"O-okay, so… what do we…?"

B.B. swiftly rolled us over, until he was hovering over me, "Well, just so you know, it *is* possible for two males to do *it* ," he chuckled wickedly, although a few nerves were still visible on his face, "However, I don't think you are quite ready for that, yet, so this time we'll do something a little different. Just…be sure to let me know if I do anything you don't like, okay?"

Wanting to make that worried look that had appeared on B.B.'s face disappear, I leaned up and kissed him quickly before laying back and relaxing completely beneath him, "Okay. I trust you, B.B.."

I watched as a shudder tore through B.B., and I could see the lust starting to fill up his eyes again. He leaned down and kissed me again, but this one didn't end with lips, this kiss was like the first one, only even more passionate. B.B. held nothing back, and I soon found myself once again sucking B.B.'s tongue into my mouth. The kiss just kept getting hotter, tongues twisting together, moving from my mouth to his, lips pressed so close that I lost track of where my mouth ended and his began. The taste, the smell, everything around me was all B.B., and no amount of fire had ever made me feel this hot.

B.B.'s body loomed over mine, his scales dragging teasingly across my fur. His claws started trailing through my fur again, but this time, they didn't stay above the shoulders. I gasped into the kiss as I felt those tortuous claws making their way across my chest, down over my belly, and up and down along my sides before gripping firmly onto my hips. Oh Arceus, this was just like my dream, only *so* much better! B.B. pulled back from my lips, but the kissing never stopped as his kisses followed the trail his claws had blazed. I tried to hold back my whimpers as that incredible mouth nipped and kissed all across my chest, working at a leisurely pace that made me wonder if B.B. was dead set on robbing me of every last shred of my sanity.

After what felt like both far too long and not near long enough, the torment came to a stop when B.B. nuzzled his face into my soft belly fur and let out something that was halfway between a sigh and a moan. The next sound B.B. made, however, was *definitely* a moan. He glanced down from where he was, and then looked up at me with a look full of worship and lust. He pulled back from me slightly, and then I saw why. Without even noticing, with all of the distractions, I

had gotten hard as a rock. I flushed bright red for about the thousandth time today, as I looked down my body to see B.B. settled between my legs, with my cock bobbing inches away from his face, and him licking his lips as he leaned closer and…

" *B.B.!"*

B.B.'s tongue drew lazy circles around the head of my penis, while one of his paws left my hips to grasp my shaft and start working it with languid strokes. I bit my lip, fighting desperately to keep my voice down as his tongue started taking turns with his paw at stimulating my shaft, making each stroke of his paw smoother and more sensual the wetter he made me. As my precum started to leak and mix with his saliva, his paw started pumping me harder and faster, while his mouth took a break to move down and nibble on my sheath. I bit my lip harder, to the point where I could feel the skin about to break, when I was interrupted by B.B. suddenly moving back up to gently pull my lip from between my teeth with his own.

"Don't do that. It's okay, there is no one around to hear you but me. Let me hear your voice, Bullet."

Just as quickly as he had been face to face with me, he was back down between my legs again, and with one last lick at my slit, he took me in his mouth and swallowed me down whole. I screamed and writhed and bucked up against the paw on my hip that was still holding me to the floor. I couldn't think. All I could do was whimper and moan as B.B. began to bob his head, combining mind-numbing suction with even more enthusiastic ministrations by that tongue. The paw that had been stroking me moved down to tease my balls and give them a gentle squeeze. Masturbation had *never* felt this good!

"Ah! Oh sweet Arceus! B.B…. feels *so* good! *B.B.!* Oh *yes* ! *"*

B.B. clearly liked what he was hearing, kicking his ministrations up to a whole new level of intensity. He hollowed his cheeks with each long suck as he pulled back, and released my hip to pump my length hard as it slipped from between his lips. At the end of every long draw, his tongue would press *hard* into my slit, and at the same time, his paw would give a *squeeze* to my sack, before his mouth

dove forward, taking me to the hilt once again. No longer restrained, I couldn't help myself from bucking up into his mouth. B.B. didn't try to stop me. In fact, as I thrust into the back of his throat, his only response was a moan that sent shivers up my spine and twisted the knot in my stomach so tight it felt like I would die!

"B.B…. Oh Arceus! B.B., I can't… I'm gonna…!"

That was as close as I could get to a warning before, all at once, the tension snapped and I came screaming B.B.'s name, flopping around like a magikarp, and seeing nothing but white. I had never orgasmed so hard in my entire life! Just as I was starting to worry that I would never come back down, my eyelids fluttered open to reveal B.B., licking the cum off of me. A particularly hard shudder mixed in amongst all the other trembles of afterglow that had me quivering like jelly. I didn't know whether to be embarrassed, aroused, or both, but as I wasn't in any shape to do anything about it either way, I tried to let it go.

B.B. noticed I was back and gave me a peaceful smile before pulling me into his arms. I cuddled into his embrace, more than content to enjoy this feeling of bonelessness wrapped in his strong arms. I could feel B.B. panting, and for the first time I realized how selfish I had been not getting him off, too. However, from my position pressed against his lap, it didn't take me long to realize that B.B. wasn't hard. Could he have…?

"B.B…. did you…?"

B.B. hummed an affirmative, understanding my implied question. Then he gave a slightly sheepish chuckle, "You came in my mouth, remember? Who do you think made a mess all over you?"

And again I was flushed red, stammering gibberish that couldn't be made sense of, and finally giving up and burying my face into B.B.'s chest. I couldn't believe I had done that! He laughed breathlessly and pulled me tighter into a hug. He clearly didn't mind my awkwardness.

We stayed there in silence for awhile, holding each other close, pressed together on B.B.'s floor. It was warm, I was comfortable,

and I had nearly drifted off to sleep when I heard B.B.'s voice again.

"You know, as nice as this is, we probably shouldn't sleep on the floor, and sadly, my bed really isn't made for two. How about the two of us get out of here, and go somewhere a little more comfortable?"

I *might* have pouted just a little bit as I looked up at B.B.'s face with sleepiness clearly evident in every hair on my pelt. He just looked back at me with an adoring smile and loving gaze.

"Don't worry, sweetheart. You don't have to walk. I'll carry you."

And just like that, B.B. was scooping me up off the floor into his arms, bridal style. Even in my melted state, I still squirmed a little in surprise, mostly at how easy B.B. made it look, even though we were the same height and nearly the same weight. However, since B.B. paid no mind to my brief protest, I gave in and settled into his arms, pillowing my head against his shoulder.

I didn't care to pay much attention to where we were going; only half noticing as B.B. carried me through the doorway and out into the surrounding forest. I was the happiest I could ever remember being, and as B.B. ferried me through the trees, leaping gently from branch to branch, the rocking gently lulled me to sleep. My last idle thought before I succumbed to my exhaustion was wondering if I would dream of B.B. again... Probably not. I had the real thing now, so I didn't need to dream.